

Dinámicas/
Movement Building Activities
for Popular/People's Education

CHW Common Indicators Project
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Introduction to the 2021 Edition

Popular/people's education (PE) is a philosophy and methodology for education and organizing that has been used around the world for generations. One of the main ideas of popular education is that we all learn and accomplish more together when we feel a sense of trust with the people around us. One method used in PE to build trust are social learning games. In Spanish they are called *dinámicas*. In English, they can be called “movement-building activities” (MBAs). This name has a double meaning. Many MBAs involve physical movement. They also help to create a social movement for justice.

Unlike the “icebreakers” used in the U.S., *dinámicas*/MBAs are used intentionally with a specific purpose. They can be short or long, simple or complicated, funny or more serious. Some of the *dinámicas* included in this booklet came from work in El Salvador in the 1980s. Many of them are also included in a book called, *Técnicas Participativas para la Educación Popular* (Participatory Techniques for Popular Education) published by Alforja, a Costa Rican publisher of materials for popular education, as well as *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* by Augusto Boal. This booklet was refined and revised in 2017 by Beth Poteet of the Multnomah County Health Department, with input from various groups of participants. It has been further revised in 2021 with input from Teresa Campos-Dominguez, Pennie Jewell and Victoria Adewumi.¹

Over the years, we have learned a number of things. One is that participating in *dinámicas*/MBAs can be scary for some participants at first. Therefore, we always invite participation, and never force it. To help people feel more comfortable engaging, we usually do a welcome and introductions first, as well as sharing the objectives and agenda for a session. Only then do we invite people to participate in the *dinámica*/MBA. Finally, we have learned it is important to specify that *dinámicas*/MBAs can be adapted for different physical abilities. For example, many *dinámicas* that involve movement can be done sitting or standing. It's really important to support all participants to choose an appropriate level of activity.

We hope that you will enjoy the *dinámicas*/MBAs in this booklet and use them often!

The CHW Common Indicators Project

¹ Note: Many *dinámicas*/MBAs can be adapted for Zoom. A new *dinámica*/MBA booklet just for Zoom is coming soon! For now, we have marked with an asterisk *dinámicas*/MBAs that can easily be adapted to Zoom.

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DINÁMICAS/MOVEMENT BUILDING ACTIVITIES

To Get to Know Each Other

Piña y Naranja/Pineapple and Orange

Purpose:	To help people get to know one another's names
Seating Pattern:	Everyone seated in a circle
Number of Participants:	Can be done with as few as six, but works better with 10 or more. Can be done with a very large group (40 or more).
Level of Movement:	High

Process: The leader stands in the center of the circle. Go around the circle and have everyone say their name. The leader points to someone and says "piña" or "naranja." If the leader says "piña," the person must say the name of the person on their *right*. If the leader says "naranja," the person must say the name of the person on their *left*. If the person says the wrong name or takes too long, they come to the center and become the leader.

If it appears that everyone knows the names of the people to their right and left, then the leader can say "canasta revuelta," (fruit basket turnover.) Everyone must get up and find another seat. While they are moving, the leader finds a seat. Whoever is left in the middle becomes the leader.

Los Vecinos/The Neighbors

Purpose:	To help people get to know one another's names; animation
Seating Pattern:	Everyone seated in a circle
Number of Participants:	At least 8; can be done with as many as 20-30.
Level of Movement:	High

Process: The leader stands in the center of the circle. Go around the circle and have everyone say their name. The leader asks someone in the circle, "¿Te gustan tus vecinos?" (Do you like your neighbors?) If the person answers "yes," then everyone stays where they are. If the person answers "no," then the leader asks, "¿Con quién quieres cambiar?" (With whom would you like to exchange?) The person who is asked names another person on the other side of the circle. Then, the neighbors of the person asked and the neighbors of the person named must switch places. ***The person asked and the person named do not move.*** In the meanwhile, the leader also looks for a place to sit. Whoever is left standing becomes the leader and must ask, "¿Te gustan tus vecinos?"

El Cartero Trae Cartas/The Mail Carrier Brings Letter

Purpose:	Animation; Getting to know each other
Seating Pattern:	Everyone seated in a circle
Number of Participants:	6 to 50
Level of Movement:	High

Process: The leader stands in the middle of the circle of chairs, and says, “El cartero viene de Madrid y trae cartas para todos los que le gustan a leer. (The mail carrier comes from Madrid and brings letters for everyone who has black shoes.)” Everyone in the circle who has black shoes must get up and find another seat. They cannot take the seat next to them. In the meanwhile, the leader also tries to find a seat. The person who is left standing becomes the leader and must say, “The mail carrier comes from (somewhere else) and brings letters for everyone who (some other characteristic).” Based on the level of trust within the group, you can encourage characteristics that are more personal and not based on what people are wearing. You can also use the Mail Carrier to introduce a topic by creating pre-printed characteristics related to the topic. For example, “I bring letters for everyone who has helped a community member apply for health insurance.”

My Name Is and I Like To

Purpose:	Getting to know each other
Seating Pattern:	Everyone standing in a circle
Number of Participants:	6 to 30
Level of Movement:	Moderate

Purpose: The leader invites all of the participants to stand in a circle. They begin by sharing their name and an activity that they like to do. When they say the name of the activity, they will do a physical motion that goes along with that activity. The participants will then say back the leader’s name, their activity and do the motion. The next participant will follow the same pattern, sharing their name and an activity that they like to do. Allow everyone a chance to share their name and activity.

Adaptation: Other characteristics can be substituted for favorite activities, including favorite stretch, what their homeland is famous for, their hairstyle when they were 13, what they want to do over the summer, etc.

DINÁMICAS/MOVEMENT BUILDING ACTIVITIES To Build Participation and Energy

Regálame Fuego/Give Me a Light

Purpose:	Animation
Seating Pattern:	Participants seated in a circle
Number of Participants:	This dinámica works best with more than 8 people and can be done with very large groups.
Level of Movement:	High

Process: The leader stands in the middle of the circle. The leader goes to someone sitting in the circle and says, “Regálame fuego. (Give me a light.)” The person says, “Vaya al otro rancho. (Try the next house.)” The leader continues to ask for a light and people continue to send the leader away for awhile. Then, someone who is asked for a light answers by saying, “¡Se me quemó el rancho! (My house burned down!)” At this point, everyone in the circle has to get up and find another chair. The leader also tries to get a chair. Whoever is left standing in the middle of the circle then becomes the leader and has to go around asking for a light.

Cat and Mouse

Purpose:	Animation
Seating Pattern:	Participants standing in the room
Number of Participants:	8 to 40
Level of Movement:	High

Process: Ask everyone to find a partner and decide who will be the cat and who will be the mouse. The cat will chase the mouse in slow-motion. Once the cat tags the mouse, they switch roles and continue the chase in slow-motion. Ask participants to be careful with their fellow participants. If you are doing this activity outside, create a boundary that the participants have to stay within.

Calles y Avenidas/Streets and Avenues

Purpose:	Physical activity and animation
Seating Pattern:	Participants stand in rows and columns, like this:
Number of Participants:	19-28
Level of Movement:	High
Special Note:	This dinámica requires a lot of space. It is best to do it outside.

Process: People form the rows and columns shown above. They link hands down the rows or down the columns. Linking hands one way forms “streets.” Linking hands the other way forms “avenues.” Two people are chosen or volunteer to be the “gato” (cat) and the “ratón” (mouse). The cat chases the mouse up and down the streets and avenues and tries to catch the mouse. The leader stands apart from the group and calls out “street” or “avenue.” At the leader’s command, the people forming the grid drop hands and then link up the other way to form the other formation. This means that just as the cat is about to catch the mouse, the grid may change and the cat may lose their opportunity. If the cat catches the mouse, then the mouse becomes the cat and someone else volunteers to become the mouse. The original cat gets to take that place in the grid.

Onda a la Derecha/Wave to the Right

Purpose:	Animation
Seating Pattern:	Everyone seated in a circle
Number of Participants:	4-100+
Level of Movement:	High

Process: The leader stands in the center of the circle. When the leader says, “Onda a la derecha,” (“Wave to the right,”) everyone moves one seat to the right. When the leader says, “Onda a la izquierda,” (“Wave to the left,”) everyone moves one seat to the left. When the leader says, “Tempestad,” (“Storm,”) everyone must find another seat on the other side of the circle. The leader also searches for a seat, and whoever is left in the middle becomes the leader.

El Pueblo Manda/The People Rule (or Say)

Purpose:	Animation
Seating Pattern:	Any formation (usually standing in a circle)
Number of Participants:	From 1 to 100+!

Level of Movement: Adaptable; could be done while seated

Process: This game is somewhat like Simon Says but it is not exactly the same. The leader stands in front of the group where everyone can see the leader. The leader explains that when the leader does an action (like tapping their head with their hand) and says “El pueblo manda que hagan esto (The people say do this)” everyone should do that action. However, if the leader does an action and only says, “Que hagan esto (do this)” without mentioning the *pueblo*, then no one should do it. The leader begins to do actions and say “El pueblo manda que hagan esto. (The people say do this.)” At some point, the leader does an action and only says, “Que hagan esto. (Do this.)”

There are various possibilities when participants “mess up” and do an action that the people didn’t tell them to do. These are: 1) The people who mess up have to sit down and you continue with the *dinámica* until only one “champion” is left standing; 2) The person who messes up has to lead the *dinámica*; or 3) Nothing happens and everyone just continues to do the *dinámica*.

Variations: Since this *dinámica* does not require that participants speak, you can teach the *dinámica* in any language. Or, you can start in one language and then switch to another. If people who mess up have to lead the *dinámica*, it’s a good opportunity for them to teach the *dinámica* in another language.

Elefante y Girafa/Elephant and Giraffe

Purpose: Animation
Seating Pattern: Everyone standing in a circle
Number of Participants: 8-20
Level of Movement: Moderate; can be done while seated

Process: The leader stands in the middle of the circle. The leader points to someone in the circle and says either “elefante” or “girafa.” If the leader says, “elefante,” then the person pointed to must put out their hands, making the trunk of the elephant. The people to their left and right must make the ears of the elephant by shaping their arms into large circles next to the “elephant.” If the leader says, “girafa,” then the person pointed to must put their arms up in the air to make the long neck of the giraffe. The people next to them must put one arm up to the giraffe and one arm down to the floor, making the legs of the giraffe. If any of the three people make a mistake or don’t respond quickly enough, that person becomes the leader and must say “elefante” or “girafa” to others.

Corn, Beans and Squash

(version created by Pennie Jewell, CHR/CHW, Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi, Michigan)

Purpose:	Animation
Seating Pattern:	The group can be sitting in any formation – a circle, rows of chairs, or theater seating.
Number of Participants:	6-100+
Level of Movement:	Moderate; mostly sitting

Process: Divide the group into three sections. Explain that one section is “corn,” one section is “beans,” and one section is “squash.” Ask each section to identify themselves by calling out their name. Explain that you are going to tell a story and that in the story you are going to mention the three names. When a section hears its name, everyone should stand up, turn around once, and sit down again. Practice this once. Then tell a story something like this:

When Native people speak of the “Three Sisters,” they are referring to corn, beans, and squash. Known as the “sustainers of life,” these are the basic foods of nourishment. They are seen as three beautiful sisters, because they grow in the same mound in a garden. The corn provides a ladder for the bean vine. The squash vines shade the mound and hold moisture in the soil for the corn and beans. This legend of “Three Sisters” originated when a woman of medicine, who could no longer bear the fighting among her three daughters, asked the Creator to help her find a way to get them to stop. That night she had a dream, and in it, each sister was a different seed. One was beans, one was corn and the other, squash. In her dream, she planted the corn first. She planted the corn first so that it would grow tall, above the beans and squash. Then she planted the beans, so they could climb the corn. The corn, in turn, supported the beans. Last she planted the squash, so that its leaves would not shade the corn or beans. She planted them in one mound in just the way they would have lived at home. She told the corn, beans and squash, that in order to grow and thrive; they would need to be different but dependent upon each other. They needed to see that each was special, and each had great things to offer on her own and with the others. Many a legend has been woven around the Three Sisters, corn, beans, and squash. Sisters who should be planted together, eaten together, and celebrated together. Legends vary from Tribe to Tribe but the message remains the same that the three crops of corn, beans, and squash should be planted together. Three sisters helping and loving each other.

Variation: Once Upon a Time in Nigeria (aka Cassava, Beans and Rice)

(version created by Victoria Adewumi, Community Liaison/CHW for the City of Manchester, NH Health Department)

Once upon a time, in Nigeria there was a great village. In the village were many women, men and children. The people lived in harmony and were famous for the beautiful food they grew. In all the land, there was no village that grew better cassava, beans and rice. But one day, a mighty wind blew through the village. Across the village cassava, beans and rice started to blow away. The people started to get worried. They said, “What will

happen to us if we lose our rice? What will happen to us if there are no more beans to eat? How can we live if we can't take the cassava to market?" The people got very excited and ran to the farms. There, they saw beans, cassava and rice flying everywhere. They tried to catch the beans. They tried to catch the cassava. They tried to catch the rice. Soon, as quickly as the mighty wind came, it blew out of the village. The people were happy! They arrived at the market the next day with all their cassava, beans and rice intact. They sold all the cassava, beans and rice and everyone was happy.

Variation: Healthy Breakfast

(version originally created by Teresa Campos Dominguez, CHW with the Multnomah County Health Dept. in Portland, Oregon)

Purpose:	Animation
Seating Pattern:	The group can be sitting in any formation – a circle, rows of chairs, or theater seating.
Number of Participants:	6-100+
Level of Movement:	Moderate; mostly sitting
Adaptation:	Participants can remain sitting and “shake it up” in their seats.

Process: Divide the group into three sections. Explain that one section is “bananas,” one section is “strawberries,” and one section is “blueberries.” (If working virtually, you can say, “People whose first names start with A-G are bananas. People whose first names start with H-M are strawberries. People whose first names start with N-Z are blueberries.”) Ask each section to identify themselves by calling out their name. (If working virtually, say each fruit and ask people to wave their hands.) Explain that you are going to tell a story and that in the story you are going to mention the three fruits. When a section hears its name, everyone should stand up, “shake it up” like they are in a blender and sit down again. People can also remain seated and “shake it up.” Practice this once. Then tell a story something like this:

One morning, Victoria got up and decided she wanted a smoothie for breakfast. She checked the refrigerator and found she had bananas, strawberries and blueberries. Victoria wondered, “Do I want a blueberry smoothie? Do I want a banana smoothie? Or do I want a strawberry smoothie? Actually, I think I want a smoothie with bananas, strawberries, AND blueberries! As Victoria was making her smoothie, her sister Valerie came down the stairs. She said, “Can I have a banana smoothie? On the other hand, can I have a strawberry smoothie? No, I changed my mind; I want a smoothie with blueberries and bananas!” As Victoria and Valerie were making smoothies, their friend Mariela knocked on the door. (This was before COVID.) “Hi Mariela,” said Valerie. “Do you want a smoothie?” Mariela replied, “Yes, I would like a smoothie with bananas, blueberries and strawberries!” “Coming right up,” said Victoria. At that moment, Celeste and Danielle showed up at the door. “It looks like you are making smoothies!” they said. “We want one too!” So they made more smoothies with blueberries, strawberries and bananas. They drank every last drop and had a great time!

Notes:

- 1) You can tell this story in any language, even a language that no one in the group speaks. They only have to learn three words in the other language in order to be able to play the game. Sometimes it is more fun if they only know three words and have to listen hard for them.

Me Voy A Paris/I Am Going to Paris

Purpose:	Animation
Seating Pattern:	Participants standing in a circle
Number of Participants:	4 to 12
Level of Movement:	Moderate; can be adapted

Process: The leader stands in the circle with the rest of the group. The leader turns to the person to their left and says, “Me voy a Paris. (I am going to Paris.)” The person to their left responds by asking, “¿A qué? (What for?)” and the leader answers, “A comprar un molino. (To buy a mill.)” The leader starts to crank an invisible mill with their right hand. The person to their left responds with pleasure or surprise or horror, as desired. Then the next person turns to the person to their left and says and does the same thing. Continue around the circle ‘till everyone has spoken and everyone is cranking an invisible mill.

Continuing to crank the invisible mill, the leader says to the person to their left, “My voy a Boston (or wherever). (I am going to Boston.)” The person asks again, “¿A qué? (What for?)” and the leader answers, “A comprar una silla mesadora. (To buy a rocking chair.)” The leader starts to rock back and forth, while still cranking the mill. Continue around the circle in the same manner.

Continue to add more actions until the group is tired. Other things to buy include: *una bicicleta* (a bicycle), and *una hoola* (a hoola hoop).

Whoosh, Whoa, Zip!

Purpose:	Animation
Seating Pattern:	Everyone standing up in a circle (or seated)
Number of Participants:	4-100+
Level of Movement:	Moderate; involves standing but could be done while seated

Process: There are three actions in this dinámica: whoosh, whoa, and zip. The leader turns to the right or left and initiates a "whoosh" - a wave like motion using both arms accompanied by saying "whoosh!" The person who gets "whooshed" either continues the action to the person on the opposite side of him or her, or says "whoa," putting one hand up to the "whoosh." This action will block the "whoosh." The "whoosh" must then turn to the other side and attempt to "whoosh" again. However, if that person also says "whoa," then the "whoosh" must "zip" by pointing to someone else in the circle and saying "zip!" This will start the whole cycle over again with a new "whoosh."

Mar, Tierra y Aire/Sea, Land and Air

Purpose:	Animation
Seating Pattern:	The group stands in a circle with the leader in the middle. (Can be adapted by having people sit in chairs.)
Number of Participants:	6-30+
Level of Movement:	Moderate; involves standing but could be done while seated

Process: The leader throws a ball to someone in the group and says, "land" or "sea" or "air." The person who receives the ball must name an animal that lives in that "region." They must name a specific animal; for example, "bird" is not acceptable for an animal that lives in the air. Also, participants should not name animals that have already been named. If a participant cannot name an animal or names a wrong animal, they come to the center to lead the dinámica.

¿Quién Empezó el Movimiento?/Who Started the Movement?

Purpose:	Animation
Seating Pattern:	The group stands in a circle. (Can be adapted by having people sit in chairs.)
Number of Participants:	6-30+
Level of Movement:	Moderate; could be done while seated

Process: One person volunteers to leave the room. When the person is gone, another person volunteers to be the leader. That person starts to do a movement (such as

clapping hands or tapping shoulders) and everyone else follows them. The person who went outside is called back. They must stand in the middle of the circle and figure out who is leading the movement. The leader changes movements from time to time (when the person in the center is not looking) and the whole group follows. When the person in the center correctly guesses the leader, the leader goes outside and the game starts over again with a new leader.

Este es un Perro/This is a Dog

Purpose: Animation
Seating Pattern: The group sits in a circle.
Number of Participants: 6 to 12
Level of Movement: Low

Process: One person starts the game by turning to the person next to him/her and holding up a pen or other object and saying "This is a dog." The other person asks, "A dog?" and the first person confirms, "Yes, a dog," and hands the "dog" to the second person. The second person then turns to the third person and they repeat the same conversation. This continues around the circle until the first person is holding the object again. The first person starts the process over again, but this time the first person speaks with a definite emotion: fear, anger, frustration, sadness, etc. There's nothing to figure out in this dinámica and no one wins or loses. The point is to be as dramatic and funny as possible.

Variation: Instead of saying, "This is a dog," the first person asks, "Me compra este patito?" ("Will you buy this duck?") The second person asks, "Y pica?" ("Does it bite?") and the first person replies, "No pica." The second person takes the "duck" and says, "Te lo compro." ("I'll buy it from you.")

Pablo Llama a Pedro/Paul Calls Peter

Purpose: Animation
Seating Pattern: The group sits in a circle or semi-circle. A number (beginning with "1") is placed on the floor in front of every chair except for 2. In front of these chairs, there are "namecards" for "Pablo" and "Pedro."
Number of Participants: 6-20+
Level of Movement: Low

Process: "Pablo" starts out the game by saying, "Pablo calls Pedro." Pedro answers "Pedro calls Pablo." They repeat this two more times. After they have done it three times, then Pedro can call another number, such as "Pedro calls Number 3." Number 3 can call any other number, or Pedro, or Pablo. If Pablo is called, Pablo can **only** call Pedro. If someone (including Pablo or Pedro) makes a mistake, then that person goes to

the last numbered seat and everyone moves up one seat. The goal is to become and remain “Pablo,” who is at the top of the hierarchy. (Okay, so it’s not a very enlightened game, but it’s fun!)

DINÁMICAS/MOVEMENT BUILDING ACTIVITIES

To Break Participants into Groups

Thank You

Purpose:	To sort people into groups of a certain size
Seating Pattern:	Everyone standing up in a circle
Number of Participants:	15 to 30
Level of Movement:	Moderate; involves walking

Process: Depending on the number of groups you want, post pieces of paper around the room with the words “thank you” written in different languages. Ask the participants to practice saying thank you in the different languages with you. Pass out cards with thank you in different languages. Ask participants to find their group by saying thank you in the language written on their card.

Animal Cards

Purpose:	To sort people into groups of a certain size
Seating Pattern:	Everyone standing up in a circle
Number of Participants:	15 to 50
Level of Movement:	Moderate; involves walking

Process: Depending on the number of groups that you want, pass out cards with the pictures of animals to the participants. Ask them to find their group members by making the sound and movement of that animal.

Silent Birthday Shuffle

Purpose:	To sort people into groups of a certain size
Seating Pattern:	Everyone standing up in a circle
Number of Participants:	10 to 40
Level of Movement:	Moderate; involves walking

Process: Ask participants to line up in order of their birthdays without speaking. They will likely use their hands to share their birthday. Once everyone is lined up, starting with the beginning, ask them to share their birthdays. The facilitator can then divide up the participants into small groups.

DINÁMICAS/MOVEMENT BUILDING ACTIVITIES **To Learn, Brainstorm or Review Content**

Canción del Sombrero/The Hat Song (a.k.a. The Hot Potato)

Purpose:	Review material already learned or brainstorm on a new topic
Seating Pattern:	The group stands or sits in a circle.
Number of Participants:	6-20+
Level of Movement:	Low

Process: The leader turns on taped music or plays music on an instrument. When the music begins, the group begins to pass a hat around the circle. Everyone has to take the hat, put it on their head, and then pass it along. When the music stops, the person with the hat must do something, such as name a piece of information (something previously learned, like a role of a CHW) or share an idea or opinion (in answer to a question like, “What are some barriers to obtaining prenatal care?”)

Variation: If for any reason people don’t want to put on a hat, you can use a potato or other object and just pass it around the circle.