**Activity- Babies in the River**

**Set Up: (2 min)**

Many community issues can be resolved in different ways. This activity is designed to help us understand different ways individuals and groups respond to community problems. Be mindful of the reading on the three types of citizens from the article by Westheimer and Kahne: “ personally responsible, participatory, and social justice oriented” citizens. You will have 8-10 minutes to work in 7 groups of 5 (or 9 groups of 4) to come up with how you would solve the issue of babies being thrown in the river. All of you are village one in this scenario

**Scenario (10 min)**

You live in Village 1 by the river. Your village is pretty well off, your peoples are well educated, have businesses and do trade with others around the region. Your village has boats that can take your good and services to other villages in the region.

Village 2 up the river is a village in the mountains that is very isolated and that does not have many jobs or industry. The peoples of that village are talented craftsman, and farmers, but are very isolated and do not have many resources to grow their industry. They use all the food they grow and all the goods they make to care for their families.

There is a council of elders that govern the region and oversees the laws for the villages in the area.

One day village one wakes up to find babies floating in the river. The number of babies appears endless. For every baby that gets pulled out, more and more appear in a matter of minutes.

What does your community do?

Please record your answers on a flip chart.

What did your community do to solve the problem, why did your group choose that approach? Who was involved in solving the problem (government/the elders, private business, individuals and/or the non profits)?

**Report out (10 min)**

Several smaller groups may be invited to share their solution(s) with the larger group( 2 min each)

(ask if any groups had a different approach or different rationale than those presented)

**15-20 min Debrief**

How many of you took a service approach? How many of you took a policy approach

What is a service approach?

What is a policy approach?   
How do they differ?

Why use one over the other?

What role did government, private sector, individuals and non-profits play in the solution??  
Why is it important to engage multiple sectors in solving community problems? How do they work together?

What questions do you have about working with students on either approach- service or advocacy?

Talking Notes:

**Individual and Community responses to issues can vary from:**

**Personally Responsible Citizen**: individuals volunteering to help with a service response (i.e. volunteering for Loaves and fishes to feed the homeless, serving as a mentor to a foster youth, picking up litter on the street, pulling babies out of the river),

**Participatory Citizen**: individuals who step into leadership roles or who collectively work with neighbors to organize community responses- from organizing food drives to joining a neighborhood association, to being part of a community letter writing campaign, to organizing neighbors to foster care the babies being pulled out of the river)

**Social Justice Citizen**: Individuals who seek to rectify social inequalities by addressing root causes usually through advocating for policy changes or seeking to create systems changes. These individuals seek long term solutions and address root causes- why we have hunger or homelessness in our communities, finding out why babies are being thrown into the river and seeking to address the cause not the symptom through changes in policies, systems or practices.

**Who is responsible for addressing societal issues:** ( see Project Citizen p. 12-15) for a great activity around the role of private( individual), government and civil spheres of society in addressing community problems. Knowing who has responsibility for addressing certain community issues can focus advocacy efforts to the right stakeholders. Knowing what government entity has responsibility for what community concerns is important ( i.e. is it a city, county, state, school board issue)

**Policy change:**

Public Policies are embodied in laws, rules or regulation or agreed upon procedures used by government to fulfill its responsibilities to protect the rights of people and promote general welfare (project citizen p 15). Public policies are carried out by departments of government usually though practices and regulations. Sometimes these practices and regulations need to be changed, and not the underlying legislated policy.

Government can carry out policy alone or in partnership with civic society (non-profits or private businesses) Sometimes civic society can solve community issues by acting alone. (Project Citizen p 17 and activities found on p 19 and 21)

**Community Change**: (See YELL Curriculum p196-198)

**There are three key strategies to change policies: They often work together to create change**

**Advocacy**: arguing on behalf of an issue, idea or person, standing up for something you believe in. Things advocates do: Stand up for others, meet with people in power to get things changed, testify about or present policy /funding recommendations to city councils.

**Education**: Build understanding and knowledge about an issue, raise awareness of an issue to help change norms and behaviors. Education campaigns include social media, classes or informational meetings, Town halls, informational broches, op ed pieces

**Activism**: personally taking action or mobilizing others to take action to create change. Activists organize protests, letter writing campaigns, rallies, vigils, petitions