

WORLD HUNGER – A CULTURAL CRISIS

LEVEL: 9-12

SUBJECTS:
Social Studies,
Economics, Language
Arts

VOCABULARY:
Famine, distribution, civil
war, ethnic, clan,
overpopulation

LEARNING GOAL: Students shall develop their abilities to solve problems both in school and in a variety of situations similar to what they will encounter in life.

MATERIALS

World map, news magazines, newspapers, radio/television reports, research books

BACKGROUND

Fifteen million children worldwide die each year from starvation. This is the equivalent of the combined population of the central U.S. of Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, North Dakota, New Mexico, Montana and Wyoming. Approximately one billion people go to bed hungry every night – 750 million are considered chronically malnourished. The paradox is that famine exists in a world where there is an abundant food supply.

In underdeveloped countries, more people are either directly involved in agriculture to produce food for their families or, in more urbanized areas, a greater portion of the family income must be used to purchase food. More time is also devoted to food preparation. Primitive agricultural practices and tools cause loss of valuable natural resources such as the soil erosion which occurs when fields are stripped of wood to build fires for warmth and cooking.

Hunger exists in the world as a result of political upheaval as in Somalia in Africa and Bosnia-Herzegovina in eastern Europe. When countries are at war with other countries or civil wars are being waged, agriculture production is hindered or stopped. As food becomes scarce within a country, it becomes a political leverage to force a particular faction to cease resistance or the supply is distributed by the controlling faction. When war politics are utilized to decide which people receive food within a country, the weakest members will go hungry: children, women, the elderly and ill. When these conditions exist, relief agencies of worldwide peacekeeping organizations such as the United Nations and countries not involved in the conflict must intervene to provide food relief because hunger can involve the world in economic, social and political chaos.

OBJECTIVE

The student will:

-identify causes of hunger in different parts of the world.

-study a country's political/cultural structure to identify causes of hunger.

-develop an action plan to get food to a country and stabilize its political structure.

-make a presentation outlining findings and recommendations for solving a country's food problems.

CONCEPTUAL AREA

Future – of human existence is dependent upon international cooperation to resolve global problems.

PROCEDURE

1. Display a map of the world. Ask students to mark specific areas where a country's population is starving: Somalia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, India, Russia. Ask students if they can identify the causes of hunger in each country based on their understanding of the current events in these countries:

Somalia – disputes among warring clans;
Bosnia – control of land, ethnic wars;
India – overpopulation, poverty;
Russia – political upheaval, government control of food supplies, inefficient and inadequate agriculture production.

Point out that these four countries demonstrate the primary reasons for hunger: overpopulation, outmoded agricultural practices, civil wars, government control of food supplies and regional fighting.

2. Divide students into four problem-solving groups. Assign each group a country to study. Each group is to look at the recent history of their assigned country to answer the following questions:

- What event(s) caused the country to be suffering from hunger?
- What group(s) within the country is causing the unrest and why?
- How is the group in power controlling access to the food supply – how is food used as a weapon?
- What impact does war have upon the country's agriculture?
- How efficient has the country's agricultural system been at supplying food for the people in the past?
- How aggressive must the United Nations be in resolving hunger crises in these countries?
- What role should the United States play in each of these countries?

Using news magazines, newspapers, radio/television reports and research books for background information, have each group develop a plan to address hunger in each country.

3. Have students to sit as a panel and outline their findings and recommendations for their respective countries to the class.

RESOURCES

"A Thin Line – Feast or Famine," ICI Agricultural Products, [Farm Facts](#), American Farm Bureau Federation; C-Span Senate hearings on Bosnia-Herzegovina, February 19, 1993.

EVALUATION

Students apply research skills such as organizing information, recognizing facts/opinions and map reading to outline a problem and develop a solution. Students work as a group to solve problems and make a clear, organized presentation of their findings.