

INTERDISCIPLINARY MIDDLE GRADES (4-8) PACKAGE

AIM 7.10: What should we do about famine in the world today?

ASSESSMENT: Students will evaluate policy alternatives and make responsible decisions based on evidence and the application of previously determined criteria.

MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY: As a preparatory exercise, student working in pairs examine the Activity Sheet, Causes of Famine in Africa. Pairs list ideas to help prevent famine in Africa. The entire class reviews the ideas. The class discusses the different ways in which Hodan's family dealt with food shortages. Strategies such as these were five times as important as food aid in helping people see the famine through in Sudan 1984-1985. In your view, how should individuals, groups, and countries respond to famines in other parts of the world?

ACTIVITY: Divide the class into groups of four. Each group is assigned two or three famine relief projects that need funding. Their job is to prepare a proposal defending one plan. They will present this plan to a fictional relief agency. Their goal is to explain how their project addresses the problem of famine in Somalia. At the end of the presentations, the entire class serves as the Board of Directors of INTER-RELIEF. They only have a \$30,000 fund to spend. Ask them first to draw up a list of criteria for deciding which project applications they support. Students are then divided into new teams of four to six. Each team must decide which programs they will support and be able to explain the reasons for their selections.

SUMMARY QUESTION: Are you happy with the INTER-RELIEF decision? Explain. Would the criteria drawn up by INTER-RELIEF help to prevent famines in the future? In your opinion, are there any other criteria which should have been included?

HOMEWORK: Write a letter to a local newspaper explaining your views on international relief programs.

REFLECTION: Maps should be prominent in the classroom. Pictures of famine are also powerful for creating the classroom setting. Videos are available from famine relief organizations and the Public Broadcasting System. As a follow-up activity, students in Cecelia Goodman's 5th grade class collected money through Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF. Other classes had students collect canned food for emergency hurricane relief.

ACTIVITY SHEET - Causes of Famine in Africa

A. Poverty- Of the 20 poorest countries of the world today, eighteen are Sub-Sahara Africa. Most of these countries have become poor in the last 30 years. Poor people are most at risk during food shortages because they have little in reserve to help them survive.

B. War- During 1945 and 1989 there were at least 30 major conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa. In the 1990s there have been major conflicts in Somalia, Sudan, Mozambique, Liberia and Angola. War interferes with farmers so they grow less food. Animals and crops are destroyed. Money which should be spent on agriculture, health care and education is spent on buying arms and feeding armies.

C. Environmental Damage- The Saharan desert is growing. Trees are cut down for firewood and to make room for crops. In 1880, 44% of Ethiopian land was covered by trees. Today it is only 4%. The roots of the trees hold water and prevent the soil from blowing away. If the soil is eroded, harvest are smaller. More than 10 million people have been forced to leave home in Africa as a result of desertification.

D. Poor Land- The best land in Africa is used for cash crops such as coffee. These crops are exported and most of the money earned goes to repay loans from foreign countries and banks. Small farmers are forced onto smaller farms on poorer land.

E. Drought - Drought is not the cause of famine but it is often the trigger which leads to a disaster. Drought has been a feature of many African countries.

F. Debt- During the 1970s many African governments borrowed large sums of money when interest rates were low. Many of those who borrowed and benefitted from the money have left office. Interest on these loans is very high. Food is sent overseas to pay off the debt while poor people go hungry and suffer from malnutrition.

ACTIVITY SHEET: PROPOSED FAMINE RELIEF PROJECTS

1- We are a cooperative of 20 farmers. We work on irrigated plots of land and train farmers in the area on pest control and sustainable methods of agriculture. We need to buy tools and seeds to distribute to farmers who take part in this program. Cost: \$5,000

2- We are a group who are providing wells for villages in the Southern region of Somalia. These wells provide water for vegetable gardens. The vegetables improve the diet of the villagers and allow them to have an income by selling any surplus in the local market. Three staff members need training on the assembly, installation and maintenance of pump systems. The course is being run in Mogadishu, the capital and will last three weeks. Cost: \$500

3- We are a group organising an awareness raising programme around water and soil conservation issues and are involved in setting up mini-nurseries in villages. We provide farmers with saplings which they can plant. Our aim is to help farmers to improve the quality of their land. We need to buy materials to set up three mini nurseries. Cost: \$2,000

4- We are a community group concerned about the poor level of education in our area. We would like to rebuild our local school which was destroyed by the militia. We will build the walls of the school with local materials. We need funding for timber and iron sheeting for roofing, doors and window frames and to repair the furniture. Cost: \$1,000

5- We are a medical team responsible for running the mobile health clinic. The mobile clinic visits six sites on a weekly basis. We also run a health program for mothers of young children. We need to buy drugs and medical supplies. Cost: \$10,000

6- We are a group of Irish nuns working in Baidoa. We run a feeding centre which provides food free of charge to the most needy people in the area. We work with the village elders and so keep food out of the hands of the warlords. We need to replace our distribution truck. Cost \$25,000

7- We are a group of Irish aid workers who are researching the nutritional needs of the population of Southern Somalia. We plan to carry out a survey to assess the population and nutritional needs and to make recommendations on how best they can

be met. To do this we need office equipment including a computer and printer. Cost: \$3,000

8- We are a group of Somali workers involved in the construction of latrines. The latrines will improve the sanitation levels and so reduce the spread of disease. We need to buy materials such as cement and corrugated iron. We also need to cover the cost of fuel which provides transport to the villages where the latrines are being built. Cost: \$4,000

9- We are members of an Education Board responsible for the running of a local school. Because of the war many children have not been able to attend school. We are trying to encourage young people in our area to attend our recently constructed school. We need to buy text books, sports equipment, teaching aids. We also need to pay four teachers salaries. Cost: \$2,500

10- We are a local women's group interested in linking up with other women's groups at national and local level to discuss possibilities for reconciliation among women of different sub-clans. We also aim to work with these women's groups to identify income generation possibilities and set up small scale enterprises. We need to run a set of five training workshops for women from four different areas. Cost: \$2,000

11- We belong to a group of young craftsman who have got together to improve the level of training in carpentry and masonry in our area. These skills would provide a source of income for many families. We would like to send one of our villagers on a six month course on carpentry and masonry in Kenya. On his return he will train the rest of the group. Accommodation, travel and course costs \$5,000.

12- We are a member of a Board responsible for the running of a local hospital. Recently a new wing was built on to the hospital. This was needed to treat children who have been injured because of the war. We now need to buy beds for the new wing. Cost: \$3,000

13- We are members of a workshop which makes artificial limbs for people who have lost limbs as a result of the war. We need to buy new machinery and to cover the cost of transporting it from Kenya. Cost: \$20,000