

Hunger Strikes!

Essential Question:

How does food shortage and overpopulation affect people?

At a Glance:

Learners play a demonstration game to show the impacts of overpopulation and hunger shortage on people in developing countries.

Background:

Living in a developed country, we often take for granted that most of us can go to the grocery store and readily buy food. But what if there weren't any grocery stores? Many people in undeveloped or developing countries don't have that luxury. They must grow their own food or get it from a local market. The problem lies where there is not viable land to grow food, land cannot be purchased, there are no markets close by, and/or people do not have money to purchase lands or food. According to the World Food Program, the key causes of hunger are natural disasters, conflict, poverty, poor agricultural infrastructure and over-exploitation of the environment. Over-exploitation of the environment includes stripping the soil of nutrients and other poor farming practices, deforestation, and overgrazing. These practices can also reduce agricultural fertility.

The country of India has nearly half of the world's hungry people. Africa and the remaining parts of Asia have approximately 40%; additional hungry people are found in Latin America and other parts of the world such as Eastern Europe and the Pacific. Over 36 million American people experience hunger – meaning 1 in 10 households in the U.S. is undernourished. See the map below for a geographical representation of undernourished populations.

Food security is a solution to the global hunger crisis. The three pillars of food security are:

- *Availability*: adequate amounts of good-quality, safe food must be produced or imported at the national and local levels
- *Accessibility*: food must be distributed and available locally, and must be affordable to all people
- *Use of food*: must be used in the best way possible for each person to be healthy and well nourished (quantity, quality, and variety)

Achieving national food security is not always easy, whether the issue be with politics (corrupt governments or countries at war, unstable social relationships), or lack of funds. Families must have the financial ability to grow or buy food, security to produce or purchase food, and time and knowledge to ensure the nutritional needs of the family.

Location: Open classroom, outdoors or gymnasium.

Objectives: *Learners will:*

- 1) list 3 reasons why hunger occurs.
- 2) locate regions on a map where hunger is prevalent.
- 3) understand how overpopulation contributes to hunger issues.

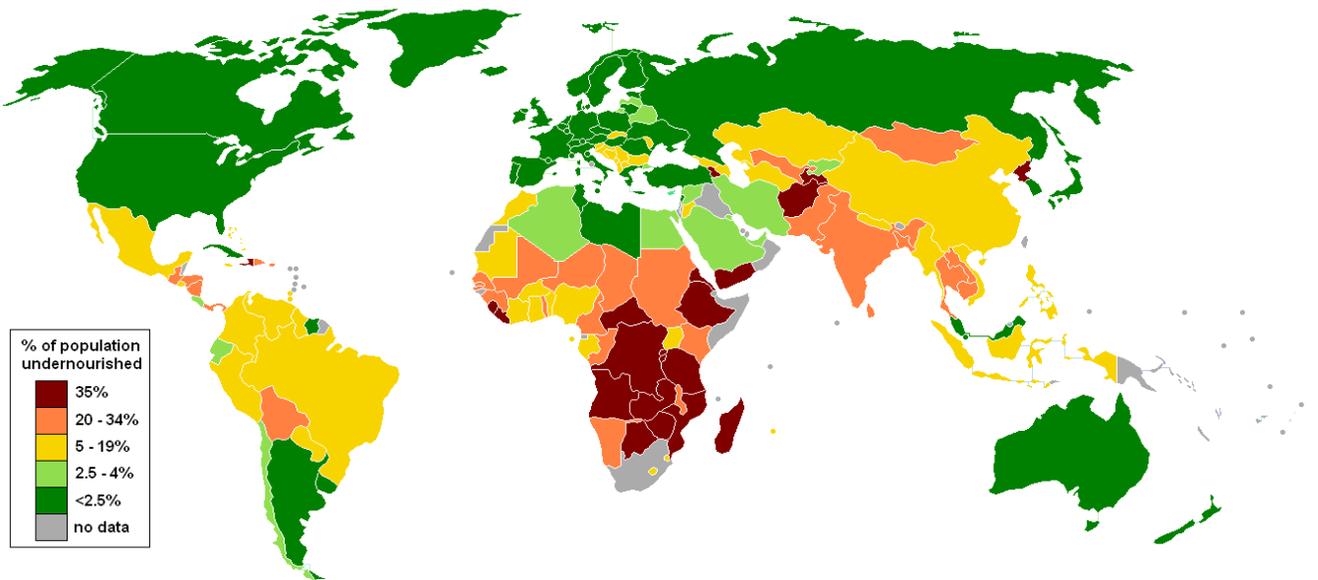
Skills: interpretation, empathy

Supplies:

- Rope or masking tape to mark off 8'x8' area
- 80 Peanuts in shell, small wrapped candies, or other food items

Subjects: science, social studies, geography

Since hunger and food security is based on so many factors, it is easy to understand why it is a global issue. While there is plenty of food in the world to feed everyone, it is not evenly distributed and the problem often lies in access. As populations grow and areas become more crowded, such as in India and Africa, food production, availability, and access become scarcer. The problem may seem too big for us to have an impact, but there are things we can do on a local level to make a difference. By supporting local farmers, food does not have to be grown in countries where food security is an issue. Food grown there rarely stays in the country, but instead is exported and travels long distances (see 'Where Does Your Food Come From?'). We can also donate to local food banks to help aid hunger in our communities. Not wasting food is a way to support global food issues, as well as reducing waste into the environment.



Sources: United Nations World Food Program's interactive "hunger map":
http://www.wfp.org/country_brief/hunger_map/map/hungermap_popup/map_popup.html

Procedure:

1. Ask learners what happens when people don't have access to a grocery store or restaurants to buy their food. (grow their own food). "What if there isn't viable land to grow food or if land is too expensive to buy for farming?"
2. Tell learners that they are going to play a game that represents overpopulation of people in a developing country and the struggles of food shortages. Use the background information to provide learners with an introduction to these issues.
3. Designate an area about 8' x 8'. Have about 8 students stand in the space which represents the land they live on in a developing country.
4. Provide a central site in the middle of this area for food distribution and place about 80 pieces of food (could be peanuts in the shell, small wrapped candies, etc.). Ask learners what people in other countries eat. We are lucky to have access to a variety of foods; however people in many parts of the world eat staple

- foods such as rice, beans, cassava, and yucca for most meals. The food you place in the middle of the square area represents a staple food crop.
5. Tell the group that everyone needs 5 pieces of food to survive. Allow the group to obtain their food in given period of time.
 6. Next, add 8 more people but don't increase the amount of food provided. Is there enough food for everyone now? You may also want to mention that along with food, more people means more homes, roads, and other infrastructure. If inside, place chairs or boxes in the area to represent infrastructure and overcrowding. With more land needed for infrastructure and homes, there is less viable land for growing food.
 7. Next, add 8 more people (24 total). Is there enough food?
 8. Allow learners to discuss their frustrations with so many people and lack of food in a small area. What would feel like if you were truly hungry, not just in need of a snack?
 9. Review what contributes to hunger (poor farming practices, corrupt government, overpopulation, war, etc.). Ask learners to think of ways they can help aid in global hunger. This may be something that impacts food production locally or globally (i.e. buy and eat local produce/products, donate to food banks).

Discussion:

Name 3 things that contribute to the world hunger crisis.

In which parts of the world is hunger a serious problem? Why is it clustered in specific areas?

How did it feel to not get any food in the demonstration game? What if that was your real life? Does it seem fair?