



Food

Insecurities, Impacts, and Interventions

THIS ACTIVITY helps participants gain a greater understanding of the ripple effect of food insecurity on families; it also asks participants to consider interventions that might mitigate these impacts or effects at family, community, government, and international levels.

TIME REQUIRED: 30 MINUTES | INTENDED FOR GRADES 6-8



social studies



economics



language arts



government

MATERIALS NEEDED

- » Copies of Resource, “Food Insecurities Case Studies,” found on pages 112-115, one story for each group of four or five participants
- » Butcher paper and markers
- » Self-stick notes, one pack for each group of four or five participants
- » Colored pencils or pens (four different colors), one set for each group of four or five participants
- » Visit worldvision.org/lp/acsi-teacher-resources for a video you can show to support this lesson. (optional)

Activity Steps

1
2

INVITE THE PARTICIPANTS to form groups of four or five. Provide each group with one of the case studies from Resource on pages 112-115, a sheet of butcher paper, a marker, a pack of self-stick notes, and four colored pens or pencils.

ASK THE GROUPS TO READ the assigned case study and then brainstorm the impacts of food insecurity. They should try to formulate possible intervention activities at each level—family, community, government, and NGO/international body. Tell them to record their idea on the self-stick notes, designating one pen or pencil color for each of the four levels. Encourage the participants to brainstorm freely and record all ideas, describing both the problem (impact) and the solution (intervention) without judgment or editing.

3

INVITE ONE PERSON FROM EACH GROUP to divide the group's butcher paper into four sections. Tell them to write one of the levels cited in step 2 (family, community, government, NGO/international body) in each section. Then ask the groups to choose their best ideas and place the self-stick notes for those ideas on the appropriate sections of the butcher paper.

4

INVITE EACH GROUP TO SHARE its best ideas with the large group. Reflect on the feasibility of the ideas and what persons or groups would need to advocate for action at each level. Then conclude by asking everyone to join you in prayer.

RESOURCE

Food Insecurities: Case Studies

Note to teachers: Let your students know that these stories were recorded in 2008 and that, while some of the specific statistics and situations may have changed, the challenges they portray are still very real for millions around the world.

Afghanistan: Child Brides

The main staple for most Afghans is wheat flour, used in making bread. In 2007, the price of an eight-pound bag of wheat flour was 80 Afghani (\$1.60). Today it's 400 Afghani, or about \$8.00. This represents a 400 percent increase. As wheat prices skyrocket, precious livestock is sold to subsidize family incomes.

Food insecurity, combined with serious drought, is driving some families in Afghanistan to desperate measures. When selling livestock does not provide enough income to survive, they will marry off daughters as young as 7 years old to ease their debt and pay for food and household expenses. Afghan law states that a girl must be 16 years old and give consent to marry, but in the face of increasing hunger and debt, these laws are not being enforced.

FATIMA'S STORY

FATIMA * IS 11 YEARS OLD. She is in the third grade. Her favorite class is Dari language, her mother tongue. She loves her teacher, Miss Saleya. In the presence of guests, she is a shy and quiet child. Grasping her headscarf to her mouth, she lowers her eyes whenever she is addressed.

"I like school," she says softly, almost in a whisper. "I am a good student. One day, I would like to be a doctor."

But it's not certain Fatima will realize her dream. Recently, her father engaged her to a local man in exchange for 300,000 Afghanis, the equivalent of \$6,300.

Her mother, a frail 35-year-old named Sausan, is seated in a far corner of the room. "We had to do this," she says with little emotion, her placid expression a sign of weariness. Earlier in the week, she gave birth to her seventh child, and she suffers from anemia, a result of both nutritional deficiency and blood loss during labor.

"We have no money," she explains. "How can nine of us eat on two, maybe three dollars a day, with all the other expenses? We had to sell Fatima in order to pay all the people we owed."

"These days the high price of food is affecting us in a bad way," Sausan continues. "In the past, my husband's work as a daily laborer covered our expenses. But now, we are borrowing money just to buy food. We are in a very bad situation."

They survive on very little—tea and bread, dried yogurt soup, some potatoes, lentils, and chickpeas. It has been a long time since they tasted meat.

Fatima and two other siblings receive monthly food rations through a food for education program. This feeding program draws some 75,000 students to schools throughout Badghis and Ghor provinces. But for many families, it is not enough.

Fatima's family does not have land or livestock to sell. Each month, half the family's income covers rent for their small two-room mud house. What remains is not enough for wheat flour. Fatima is among the last of their "assets."

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RESOURCE

Food Insecurities: Case Studies (continued)

While her mother lists reasons for “selling” her daughter, Fatima sits quietly by the one window that sheds light into the dark room and listens to children playing in a mud compound nearby. Every few minutes, she looks out the window, which is an open space without glass and framed by two wooden shutters. She is as expressionless as her mother. Sausan says that Fatima won’t be forced to marry immediately. She can live at home and continue school for four more years. “In the agreement, we said she must.”

But this family has seen hard times before, and two older sisters have not fared so well. The eldest daughter, Riala, 16, was forced into marriage at 11. Today she is the mother of two. The second daughter, Halima, 14, is also married with an 18-month-old daughter. Fatima will be fortunate if she is permitted to continue her schooling.

Sausan describes her situation in factual terms. This is not what she wanted for her family. “All I ever dreamed of having was a good house, enough food, and a healthy family—a peaceful country, too, where my children could get an education.” Fatima shares her mother’s dream. “I wish we had a developed country. One that was peaceful and green.”

Outside, the dry wind whips silt into the air. It settles into drifts that collect against the side of the house.

“We didn’t want to sell her,” her mother says. “We wanted to wait until she was 20. But we were forced to . . .” Sausan’s voice grows softer and trails off. “There was no other way.”

*names have been changed to protect identities

(This story was adapted from a story by Mary Kate MacIsaac, World Vision staff, June 2, 2008.)

Senegal: Children and Education

Senegal is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking 156 out of 177 countries on the United Nations Development Program’s (UNDP) Human Development Index. More than half the population of Senegal lives on less than \$2 a day.

The recent food crisis has made it increasingly difficult for Senegalese families to access the cereal crops upon which their families depend: corn, millet, rice, and sorghum. Prices on these products have risen sharply in the past three years. Between February 2007 and February 2008 alone, prices on these cereal crops rose 16 to 22 percent.

The combination of stagnating family income and rising food prices is having a disastrous impact on households. Food is essential for people’s physical and mental health and energy, especially for children in school. In many cases, limited access to food has resulted in children dropping out of school to help support their families.

NDIOUCK’S STORY

NDIOUCK IS A 12-YEAR-OLD GIRL who lives with her family in Senegal.

“I live with my mother, Dibe, who is 42 years old, and my siblings, Lamine, who is 15, and Moulaye, who is 10. Until recently, I was in school, in grade four. My father died four years ago, and since then we have gone through many difficulties, mainly related to food security. As we have no donkey or horse to work with on the farm, my mother partners with neighbors to till our land. Since my father’s death, we have not had a good harvest, which makes life more difficult for us.

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RESOURCE

Food Insecurities: Case Studies (continued)

“Things got worse this year as our food stock was used up by early January. It is very difficult to cover our food needs. On top of that my mother fell sick and could no longer find food for the family. Finally, I was obliged to leave school to help in the house as I am the only girl that my mother has.

“My half-brother, Doudou Thiaw, is 26 years old. He has gone to Dakar to find work. He tries to support us, but it’s on an irregular basis. My mother struggles every day to maintain her family. Thinking about her daily efforts meant I lost the motivation to go to school. We used to have three meals a day, but now we have come to two or one a day. Prices of rice, oil, millet, and maize have become so expensive that there is no way for us to afford a 50-pound bag of rice or millet.

“Moreover, my mother had seven goats, but unfortunately a thief stole five of them. This is common in these hard times, mainly in families whose head is a woman like ours. So now my mother has no livestock to sell in order to address our needs and often borrows from neighbors or shopkeepers to provide at least for lunch or dinner, even if it is not always enough for us to eat our fill.

“When my father was alive, we did not face these problems, but now that my mother is alone with her children, it is very difficult for her. I could no longer stand going to school, leaving her in such difficulties.”

(This story is adapted from a story written by a World Vision staff person in Senegal, May 21, 2008.)

Georgia: Divided Families

Georgia is a country in central Asia bordering Russia, Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. It is a low-income country, with 39 percent of its 4.4 million people living below the official poverty line. Approximately one-third of the population does not receive adequate dietary caloric intake.

Inflation and rising global food and energy prices are hitting already vulnerable Georgian families the hardest. The prices of bread and wheat flour have risen 33 and 32 percent, respectively, and the price of maize flour has risen 50 percent.

Milk and cheese prices are rising and even aligning, whereas in the past, cheese was always more expensive. Sunflower oil, used widely by Georgians, has also increased by 65 percent.

Today a Georgian family with six children needs about 350 GEL (about \$250) a month to survive. In 2004, the figure was 226 GEL.

Georgia is presently using only a small percentage of its agricultural potential due to the lack of modern production and storage technologies, as well as the lack of information available to farmers about markets and market prices, making production and trade decisions difficult and risky.

In the face of a rising cost of living and lowered agricultural output, children in Georgia are paying the price. Out of desperation to feed their children, some parents are making the difficult decision to place their children in institutions where they will receive regular meals. But for many children in this situation, the social and emotional costs of being removed from their homes are high.

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RESOURCE

Food Insecurities: Case Studies (continued)

MARINA'S STORY

MARINA IS A 41-YEAR-OLD WOMAN who lives with her husband and six children in Georgia.

"I dream of the day when I don't have to worry how I will feed my six children," says Marina, who laments that no one in her eight-member family has a job. The rising cost of living and increased food prices are threatening to drive her family apart.

Marina, her husband, Badri, and their children live in a suburb of Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, in a two-room flat with five beds. Inside, a stark lack of furniture and signs of poverty are the first things you notice as you enter the room. There isn't enough space to hold the children's clothes and not enough beds and chairs to go around, yet the family is together and they are grateful to have support that enables them to rent this small haven and a small government allowance of 280 GEL (about \$200).

The future looks bleak, but times have been even tougher in the past. Now the rising cost of living and increased food prices are threatening to drive the family apart again.

Two years ago, before they received assistance, the family struggled to find rent money every month and to feed their growing children.

Marina's husband worked as a security guard, earning a monthly income of 150 GEL (about \$100). They would spend 90 GEL (\$60) of that income on bread alone, and the rest had to cover rent. Their meager diet consisted of bread and tea.

"Sometimes we could not buy bread, and the children went hungry all day," recalls Marina.

When the money ran out, Marina and Badri felt that the only way they could provide for their children's basic needs was to place them in a children's institution. In Georgia, 90 percent of boys and girls in institutions have parents.

"I made the hardest decision of my life—taking my children to the orphanage was the only solution for us; otherwise they would die of hunger," says Marina.

"I lived there a year. I hate thinking of that time. I thought my parents left us there, and we would never see them again. I cried all the time," says 13-year-old Giorgi.

Living in their own place has eased the situation, but the income is still not enough for the family.

"We manage to feed our children twice a day, but sometimes they go to bed on an empty stomach," says Badri.

Marina's family is presently coping with the help of neighbors and organizations. However, the threat of having to abandon their children to an institution still looms fiercely, for this family and for thousands like it across Georgia and Eastern Europe.

(This story is adapted from a story by Ana Chkaidze, World Vision staff, May 8, 2008.)

