

Famine in the Horn of Africa

Grades 4 – 6

Background

Over 13 million people across Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Uganda are facing desperate food shortages. Hundreds of thousands of livestock and crops have died due to insufficient rainfall over successive seasons. Families are left without income, struggling to find food and water.

Somalia is at the centre of this crisis. More than half the population of Somalia is experiencing famine due to drought and decades of internal conflict. Hundreds of people are dying each day and at least half of them are children.¹ An estimated 1.7 million Somalis are displaced, traveling within Somalia and into Kenya and Ethiopia. The Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya has a population of 400,000 refugees, the largest refugee complex in the world today.²

The following activities are designed to help students learn about contemporary disasters through an examination of the crisis in the Horn of Africa. Students will learn about drought, malnutrition, famine and displacement. They will be challenged to spread awareness of the crisis by creating photo essays.

Students will

- demonstrate an awareness of drought, malnutrition, famine and displacement
- work collaboratively to organize, develop and present ideas and information
- respond critically to media texts and images
- generate ideas and support their point of view

Materials

- Computer or laptop connected to LCD projector for showing videos
- Chart paper to record student responses
- Computers, enough for each group of students (optional) to view photos and videos from the World Class [Horn of Africa Take Action Project](#) space
- Set of *Info Sheets* for each group
- *Photos from the Field* for each group (located in [Horn of Africa Gallery](#))
- Various videos (located in the [Horn of Africa Videos](#))

Time Two 60-minute lessons

Activity I: Raising the Subject

Activate prior knowledge and give a brief overview of what's happening in the Horn of Africa.

Instructions

1. Read out loud or display on the board the following statements dominating recent news:

Severe drought in the Horn of Africa: 13 million people in need of emergency aid. The United Nations announced that Somalia is experiencing the “worst humanitarian disaster in the world.”³ Famine has been declared in six regions in southern and central Somalia.⁴ One in every three people in Somalia is malnourished, in some areas half of the population is malnourished, most of them children. Thousands of people have become displaced.

Ask if anyone has been following the news over the summer. Invite students to share what they already know about the crisis in the Horn of Africa.

2. Guide students in locating the Horn of Africa and the countries that make up that region using a globe or linking to this interactive [National Geographic map](#). Using the [Horn of Africa Drought map](#) ask students to identify the most and least drought-affected countries.
3. Show students the short video [Horn of Africa Drought Crisis](#). Ask students to be attentive to both the words and images. After watching the video ask students what they learned from the images and captions. What more would they like to learn about?

Activity 2: Expert Investigators (Jigsaw Activity)

Now that students have a brief overview of the crisis in East Africa, they will investigate several concepts in further detail: drought, malnutrition, famine and displacement.

Instructions

1. Divide students into “home” groups of four. Assign each group a colour name (e.g. red group, blue group, etc.). Explain that each group member will investigate a different topic related to the crisis in East Africa. Give each group a package of *Info Sheets* and ask them to decide who will become an “expert” for each topic.
2. Ask students who are responsible for becoming an expert on drought to come together to form an expert team. Do the same for the other topics.
3. Direct each expert team to follow the instructions on their *Info Sheet* and complete the required tasks. Expert teams will choose 3 to 5 top priority messages about their topic to share with their home groups.
4. Instruct experts to return to their original home group (their colour group). Ask the experts on drought to teach their home groups about drought and its impact on countries in the Horn of Africa. Lead a whole class discussion to reflect on what was learned and address any questions.
5. Repeat until all experts have presented to their home groups.

Follow-up Activity

- Use the lesson [How to Analyze News](#) (from [Media Awareness Network](#)⁵) to help students examine the videos and news clippings from their *Info Sheets* for bias and point of view. Ask students to think critically about the videos, images and articles: What’s the purpose of these media texts? Whose point of view is being presented? Who is the audience? How might different audiences respond to these media texts?

Activity 3: Photo Journalists

Challenge students to share their learning and spread awareness by creating a photo story. It would be helpful for students to learn the basics of journalism before constructing their own photo stories. The lesson [Reporter for a Day](#) (from [Media Awareness Network](#)⁶) develops skills for writing a news story that students can apply to creating their photo stories.

Instructions

1. Students remain in their home groups. Give each group a set of [Photos from the Field](#) (or arrange for groups to view the photos from the [Horn of Africa Gallery](#)). Use some of the following questions to lead students in examining the photos:
 - What photo captures your attention the most? Explain why.
 - Look at the photos showing people. What do you think is going on? How might the people in the photo be feeling? What might they be thinking?
 - Find a photo showing people helping and describe what is happening.
 - What photo might someone experiencing famine want others to see? Why? What would they NOT want others to see?
 - How you feel when you look at these photos? How might other people react to them?
 - Who do you think took these photos and why?
2. Ask student to imagine they are photo journalists who want to spread awareness of the crisis in the Horn of Africa. Instruct each group to examine the photos, discuss and select 4 – 6 photos they think best tells the story of what’s going on. Encourage students to explain and defend their choice of photos to their group. Instruct groups to decide on an overall message for their photo story and write it out in one or two sentences.
3. Ask groups to write captions for each photo to support their overall message, making sure there is enough detail to describe the crisis in the Horn of Africa.
4. Instruct groups to create a display of their photo story and present it to another class.

Extension: Have students create their photo stories as a Power Point slideshow, a [Prezi](#) () presentation (a dynamic online slideshow, www.prezi.com) or a [Glogster](#) (online poster, www.edu.glogster.com). Groups can download and save the photos from the Gallery to their computer for creating their presentations. Alternatively, students may wish to share what they’ve learned in another form (poem, song, video, etc.).

Discussion

- How did your group decide which photos to use?
- How did your group solve disagreements?
- What message did you want to convey in your photo story. Were you successful? Explain.

Follow-up Activities

- Discuss the difference between how wealthier countries like Canada and less developed countries like Somalia cope with disasters. Use this video to start a discussion on the role of conflict in Somalia’s ability to cope with disasters such as drought and famine: *Famine in East Africa* (<http://www.cbc.ca/eastafricarelief/>). This video is located on the CBC website only.
- Teach about media literacy as students view videos, images and articles about countries in the Horn of Africa. Use the lesson [Looking Through the Lenses](#) (from [Media Awareness Network](#)⁷) to develop understanding of how the media influences our attitudes and perceptions about developing countries.

Sources:

1. The Globe and Mail. Retrieved from <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/africa-mideast/famine/article2153770.ece>
2. The Guardian. Retrieved from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/interactive/2011/sep/06/famine-somalia-dadaab-refugee-interactive>
3. Huffington Post. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/07/10/somalia-drought-worst-humanitarian-crisis-_n_894072.html
4. The Guardian. Retrieved from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2011/sep/05/famine-somalia-crisis-deepens?intcmp=239>
5. Media Awareness Network. Retrieved from http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/educational/lessons/secondary/broadcast_news/how_to_analyze_news_lesson.cfm
6. Media Awareness Network. Retrieved from http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/educational/lessons/elementary/newspapers_magazines/reporter_for_a_day.cfm
7. Media Awareness Network. Retrieved from http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/educational/lessons/elementary/consumerism/looking_through_lenses.cfm

Reproducible Master

Info Sheet #1 – Drought

1. Read the information below with your expert team and answer these questions: What is drought? How is drought affecting the land, animals and people of East Africa? What are people doing to help?
2. With your expert group, write down 3 – 5 important or interesting facts to share with your home group. Decide how you will teach these facts to your home group. Practice your presentation with a partner on your expert team.



If you have access to a computer and the Internet, watch the video: [Water, a Precious Resource in Somalia](http://youtu.be/oaPKMsZ1JWk) (<http://youtu.be/oaPKMsZ1JWk>).

WHAT'S DROUGHT?

Droughts happen when there is not enough rain for a long period of time. It's not like a dry spell - there is so little precipitation (rain, snow, sleet or any kind of moisture) that a whole region starts to dry out. Unlike other natural disasters, droughts happen very slowly over time. It usually happens over months or even years, when an area, like East Africa, doesn't have a big enough water supply.

Droughts can be very dangerous for people in living in areas with not enough food or water. Deaths can happen from lack of food and water, and there are lots of health problems too. When there's not enough water, crops fail, which means there isn't enough food to go around.

It also means that farmers lose money, and the area can become very poor. When a region is very poor and doesn't have enough food or water, arguments can happen over who should be able to access the goods, which can escalate into wars.

Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/14325352>

In the News

The current [drought](#) in [Somalia](#) is no ordinary drought. It is the worst the country has seen in 36 years. Most areas have received little or no rain for nine months. Pasture is depleted and cattle and goats are dying in large numbers, leaving thousands of animal carcasses littering the roadsides. People are seeing riverbeds dry for the first time in their lives.

Families are becoming destitute. They are dependent on livestock for survival, and have resorted to desperate measures to try to keep their animals alive. Many have used food normally kept for the family to feed their dying herds, some even going so far as to take the grass off the roofs of their houses, leaving them without adequate shelter. Children in particular are suffering from a lack of food and water. In some areas, malnutrition is affecting over 30% of children, one of the highest rates in the world.

Source: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/jun/06/somalia-devastated-by-drought-crisis?INTCMP=SRCH>

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Info Sheet #2 – Famine

1. Read the information below with your expert team and answer these questions: What is famine? How is famine affecting the people of East Africa? What are people doing to help?
2. With your expert group, write down 3 – 5 important or interesting facts to share with your home group. Decide how you will teach these facts and numbers to your home group. Practice your presentation with a partner on your expert team.



If you have access to a computer and the Internet, watch the video: [Somalia Famine Spreads](http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/story/2011/09/05/somalia-famine-spreads.html) (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/story/2011/09/05/somalia-famine-spreads.html>)

WHAT'S FAMINE?

The United Nations has declared that parts of Somalia in east Africa are suffering from a famine. The 'Horn of Africa' area is suffering its worst drought in 60 years. But what does the term 'famine' mean? The word famine is used to describe a hunger crisis at its worse. Famine is the most serious of five phases that are used by the UN and most aid agencies. Certain requirements have to be met for a situation to be called a famine. These include:

- At least 20% of the population doesn't have enough food to lead a healthy life (2 100 kilocalories per day)
- One in three children is severely malnourished
- There are two deaths per 10,000 people every day, or four child deaths per 10,000 children every day

What happens next?

The declaration of a famine doesn't force governments and charities to act or do anything. But it's hoped it works as a wake-up call. The word is used carefully though.

"It is a very strong word, with a strong impact," according to Brendan Paddy of the Disasters Emergency Committee, an organization that launches big appeals for aid overseas. "We have to be precise about how we use it... We have to raise the alarm before it's too late but we also don't want to be accused of crying wolf."

Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/14219069>



In the News

The United Nations announced on Monday that four million Somalis – more than half of the country's population – are now living in famine zones... Hundreds of people are dying every day in southern Somalia because of the famine, and at least half of the victims are children, the UN said... A sixth region of Somalia, the Bay region in the south, has been included on the list of famine zones in the country. This adds about 350,000 people to the 3.7 million who were already in famine zones. In the Bay region, nearly 60 per cent of people are acutely malnourished.

Source:

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/africa-mideast/famine/750000-somalis-are-at-risk-of-starving-within-the-next-few-months/article2154259/>

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Info Sheet #3 – Malnutrition

1. Read the information below with your expert team and answer these questions: What is malnutrition? How is it affecting people in the Horn of Africa? What are people doing to help?
2. With your expert group, write down 3 – 5 important or interesting facts to share with your home group. Decide how you will teach these facts to your home group. Practice your presentation with a partner on your expert team.



If you have access to a computer and the Internet, watch the video [East Africa Drought: Hawo and Nefiso's Story](http://youtu.be/ERYNrCT2jY) (<http://youtu.be/ERYNrCT2jY>)

WHAT'S MALNUTRITION?

A malnourished person finds that their body has difficulty doing normal things such as growing and resisting disease. Physical work becomes problematic and even learning abilities can be diminished. When a person is not getting enough food or not getting the right sort of food, malnutrition is just around the corner. Even if people get enough to eat, they will become malnourished if the food they eat does not provide the proper amounts of nutrients needed.

Source: <http://www.wfp.org/hunger/malnutrition>



In the News

Right now over 550,000 children in Somalia are malnourished because they don't have enough food to eat, and if they get any, it's not nutritionally balanced.

The drought has meant the grain and maize harvest has failed two years in a row. Camels, cattle and goats don't have any water to drink and are dying. This leaves families with no food supply, let alone any income to afford the rising prices of scarcely available imported food like rice.

Weak bodies mean children are vulnerable to deadly diseases like measles, polio and whooping cough. With Somalia having one of the lowest immunization rates in the world, this leaves children who haven't been immunized critically vulnerable to preventable diseases.

Source: [http://www.unicef.ca/portal/SmartDefault.aspx?at=2730#The drought's devastating legacy](http://www.unicef.ca/portal/SmartDefault.aspx?at=2730#The+drought's+devastating+legacy)

Acute (short-term) malnutrition—also called wasting—is a severe loss in body weight or failure to gain weight as a result of recent inadequate dietary intake.

Chronic (long-term) malnutrition—also called stunting—is measured as height for age.

Underweight is a combination of stunting and wasting, and measured as weight for age.

Source: http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/learning/humanitarian/download/guides/efsl_understanding_malnutrition.pdf

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Info Sheet #4 – Displacement

1. Read the information below with your expert team and answer these questions: What does displacement mean? What is the difference between a refugee and an internally displaced person? Why are people in East Africa displaced and how is it affecting children and families? What are people doing to help?
2. With your expert group, write down 3 – 5 important or interesting facts to share with your home group. Decide how you will teach these facts and numbers to your home group. Practice your presentation with a partner on your expert team.



If you have access to a computer and the Internet, watch this video about a family traveling to Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya: [Famine in Somalia – You can help. \(http://youtu.be/RN7GVa2nIWA\)](http://youtu.be/RN7GVa2nIWA)

In the News

The United Nations has declared famine affects [six] regions in Somalia, and thousands are fleeing to seek refuge in Kenya and Ethiopia, which are also affected by the worst drought in East Africa in 60 years.

...tens of thousands of Somalis are on the move. Their crops have dried up. Their farm animals are dead. Many Somalis have given up hope of remaining in their homeland.

So they walk – a slow trudge, really – for days and days. Some have spent a month on the road. Along the way they rest under leafless trees.

The journey preys on the young and elderly. Some are carried with dignity by family and friends and carefully placed in desolate graves in white desert sands. Others are discarded on the sides of roads as vultures hover overhead.

Source:
http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/somalis-walk-for-days-as-famine-pushes-war-racked-nation-deeper-into-abyss/2011/08/25/gIQATpOEGJ_story.html

WHAT'S A DISPLACED PERSON?

Refugees are persons who have fled their home country and cannot return because they fear their life is in danger. People become refugees when one or more of their basic human rights are violated or threatened. Many who are forced to leave their homes end up in refugee camps. Refugee camps often lack water, electricity, sanitation and health care. They are usually over-crowded and unhygienic.

Internally displaced peoples (IDPs) remain in their country of origin, unlike a refugee who crosses a national border to seek safety. IDPs are forced to leave their home due to natural disasters and/or man-made disasters, but have not crossed international territories. IDPs may be trapped in an ongoing internal conflict without a safe place to stay.

Source:
http://www.un.org/works/goingon/refugees/lessonplan_refugees.html