

CYCLE 4 PERSUASIVE WRITING RESOURCE: HUNGER & MALNUTRITION

HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION IN THE WORLD

Food (and water) is fuel for the body. Our muscles need this fuel to function. Without food for a couple of days, the body will convert all fats stored in the body to energy for use. If this condition is prolonged, the body begins to reduce its' activities naturally, and the result is the slow response, activity and reaction that you see in starving people. The body has ran out of energy and cannot work.



Every now and again, you see fund-raising adverts, news and other stories on TV, newspapers and internet with extremely skinny children, together with their skinny mothers. Those are very difficult images to ignore, but they are real. In many places in the world, there are families who cannot even bring themselves to think, talk, walk or even sleep because there is simply no energy in their bodies to do so.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that nearly 870 million people of the 7.1 billion people in the world, or one in eight, were suffering from chronic undernourishment in 2010-2012. Almost all the hungry people, 852 million, live in developing countries, representing 15 percent of the population of developing counties. There are 16 million people undernourished in developed countries.

It is very easy to think that people who are hungry in these countries are just lazy and hunger is the only result they deserve. That is not the case. It is just difficult for individuals to help themselves, especially if they are caught up with the usual conflicts, extreme climates, political or economic difficulties involved.

WHAT IS CHRONIC HUNGER?

Hunger is a word that is a bit tricky to define, but in the context of this lesson, we shall look at hunger in communities, countries and other places in the world.

Hunger is that painful sensation, or exhausted condition that one feels from want of food. In relation to countries, it is also scarcity of food, either for a short period (a year) or consistently for many years.

If a village's farms are wiped out by a flood and result in no food for a couple of months, the people of that village will be hungry. We can say hunger will set in.

But in a way, it is different from a country suffering with the effects of many years of complex political, economic and climatic adversities. People in such a country have extreme food shortage year after year with no end in sight. That too, is hunger.

Also, if a group of campers get stranded on an icy mountain for days without food, they will experience hunger too. So you see, hunger is a lot more than the absence of lunch or dinner for a day.

Hunger therefore, is the situation, surrounded by food insecurity, and results in malnourishment. The emphasis on food insecurity is important because, people suffering from hunger are constantly wondering where and when their next food will come from. Malnourishment is also key because hunger makes people eat anything to fill their tummy, with no regard to what they get from the meal. This means they can lack essential nutrients the body needs to function properly.

Hunger gets more complex and worse when more and more communities are affected in close proximity. It looks slightly hopeful when a starving village, town or country is surrounded by others with abundance, than if they are with other starving settlements.

MALNUTRITION – WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Not all food is balanced food. It is important that we eat foods that have all the necessary nutrients for a balanced development. Balanced foods must therefore contain energy, which the body needs to work with. It must also contain proteins, which is also needed for muscle development and maintenance. It is also crucial to have vitamins and minerals that help the body to heal and fight off infections and diseases.

So, malnutrition (or undernutrition) is when the body lacks some or all the nutrients needed to function properly. In fact, we have two basic types of malnutrition.

Sadly, many places with malnutrition also have poor water supply and waste disposal, and tend to be in disease prone areas. Malnourished children therefore, easily fall victim to infections and viruses, as their bodies cannot fight infections.

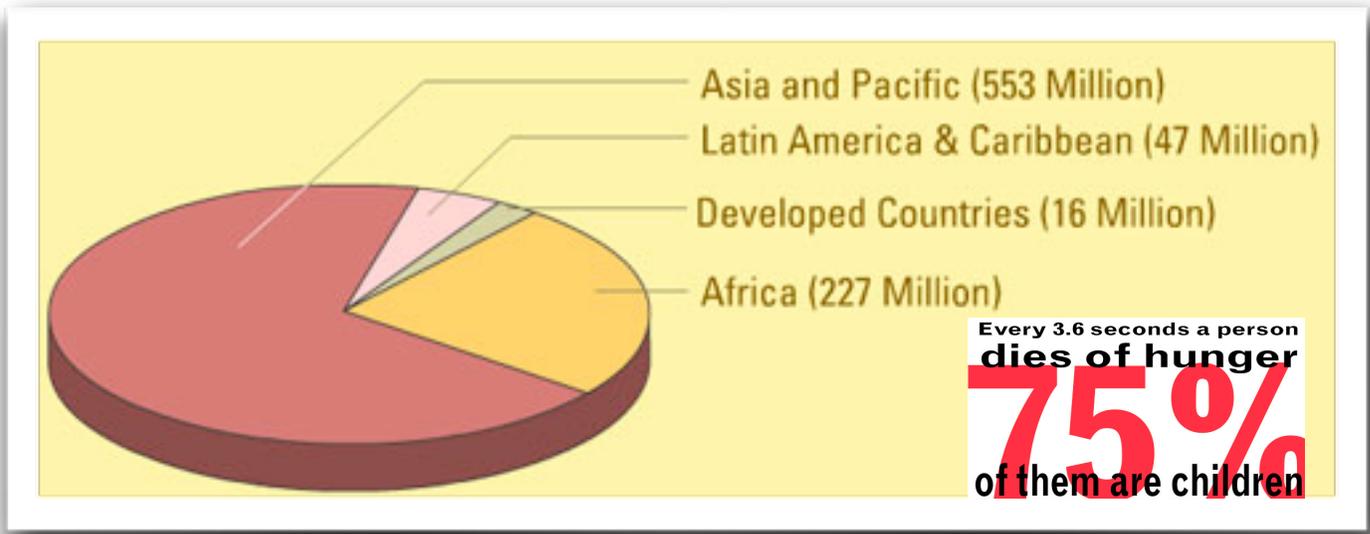
HUNGRY PEOPLE OF THE WORLD

There is hunger in almost every corner of the world, but in this lesson, we shall look at national level hunger as well as communities with persistent hunger.

● Where are they located

About 89% of undernourished people (including children) live in developing countries. The bulk (about 75%) of the world's hungry are in the rural areas and villages in Africa and Asia. These dwellers are predominantly farmers and local craftsmen who depend on their farm produce for survival.

These folks have no other source of income and that makes them extremely vulnerable in an event of floods, fires, extreme weather and diseases. Some folks also depend on fishing and forest resources as their main livelihoods.



● **Hungry women and children**

In the above mentioned places, women and children suffer the most. Malnourished mothers, and expecting mothers often give birth to underweight babies.

Children also remain **stunted** and grow up to pass on the condition to their children if their food conditions are not improved. Poor nutrition plays a role in at least half of the 10.9 million child deaths each year.

Did you know...

● *More than 30% of children in developing countries (about 600 million) live on less than US \$1 a day.*

● *Every 3.6 seconds one person dies of starvation. Usually it is a child under the age of 5.*

CAUSES OF HUNGER

If you live in a city of a developed country, where the economy, political terrain and weather are all great, it is very difficult to imagine and appreciate how people in other places with no food in sight live. Experts confirm that humans produce more than enough food to feed every mouth on earth (about 7 billion of us). So how is hunger possible?

● **Extreme weather and climate change**

Floods, storms, rains, droughts, heat and other extreme weather can cause communities a lot of destruction and wipe away farms. Some of these communities never recover fully again and begin to face many years of hardship.

Drought is now the single most common cause of food shortages in the world. In 2011, recurrent drought caused crop failures and heavy livestock losses in parts of Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya.

🔴 Wars and conflicts

Conflicts, civil wars and tension among tribes, religious and political factions often cause people to abandon their homes and jobs out of fear. People often find themselves cut off from the rest of the world because they are trying to flee. In some conflicts, fighters may also seize and control farms, sources of food and water in an attempt to get people to comply with their terms. Sometimes water bodies are polluted and water wells are poisoned as punishment to communities that they perceive to be enemies. Young men and even children who do some economic activities are forced into fighting and the result is a massive drop in food production and economic growth. Sometimes food aid is seized and directed to fighters and their families, leaving the really needy people to suffer.

Since 2004, conflict in the Darfur region of Sudan has uprooted more than a million people, precipitating a major food crisis - in an area that had generally enjoyed good rains and crops.

🔴 Poverty

Poor families and farmers often lack the funds to acquire high yield seeds, equipment and the infrastructure to produce more. They are forced to produce just what their physical strength will allow, just to have a little to live on. They usually use a lot of family labour and children end up working on the farms, instead of going to school. As these children turn adults, they are also handicapped with knowledge and ways of producing more to secure their future. The poverty cycle continues.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF HUNGER?

Hunger and poverty go hand in hand. Let us see the effects of hunger in these 4 areas:

🔴 Health:

Hunger and malnutrition makes the body weak and vulnerable to diseases and infections as the body does not have the fuel to build muscle and fight off infections. In children, this is deadly and many children die in hunger prone areas for this reason. Pregnant and malnourished mothers also deliver underweight babies, who struggle for survival. Children often have stunted growth as a result of malnutrition.

One out of six children - roughly 100 million - in developing countries is underweight. Poor nutrition causes nearly half (45%) of deaths in children under five - 3.1 million children each year.

🔴 Education:

Without proper foods (with the right balance of vitamins and minerals) the brain is not able to develop properly. Hunger also makes it difficult to concentrate on anything, especially for children. Children suffer this most, and are unable to stay in school. Hunger also keeps children away from school, as they have to walk for miles to do some farm work to make a living with their families.

66 million primary school-age children attend classes hungry across the developing world, with 23 million in Africa alone.

● **Migration and Social:**

Young adults who are able to migrate to nearby towns and cities end up in slums or run down communities, as they cannot afford the high living standards in the cities. Their low education level also makes them unsuitable for many decent paying city jobs. Many of them end up doing drugs, robbery, prostitution and other crimes to make a living.

● **Economy:**

Countries with lots of hunger tend to do poorly with the economy. This is because adults and young adults do not have the right frame of mind to work. They are constantly ill and work input and interest is very low. Fewer hands on farms also mean that there is not enough produce from the farming villages into the towns for consumption and further export.

HUNGER ALLEVIATION PROGRAMS

For many years, charities, governments, organizations and some wealthy and generous individuals have done so much to alleviate hunger and to get children stay in school. As a result, the general trend of hunger is impressively coming down, although there are a few places that are still getting worse.

HUNGER PREVENTION TIPS

It is not easy to find easy and lasting solutions to a problem with many causes and complex conditions. Now we have an idea of what causes hunger and therefore we can begin to work backwards from there. Here are a few tips to consider.

● **Education**

People who already have information and knowledge about hunger in the world need to speak out some more about it. The more the world knows about what is going on and how children are suffering in other places, the more likely it is that people will value what they have and work harder for a more secure future.

● **Leadership**

World leaders, celebrities and influential local leaders must do a bit more in reaching out to the needy communities. They must end all forms of support for conflicts and rather encourage peaceful dialogues among disputing factions. Additionally, they must be extremely quick to reach out during natural disasters, as they can potentially change the cause of a people for many years.

● **Individuals**

It is overwhelming to know that there are thousands of humanitarian and aid agencies who are all knocking on your door for funds to help feed the hungry. Many of them do a fantastic job, but there are also many who are frauds. Find a trusted agency and help them if you are able to. You can also be a local organizer to mobilize funds and resources for your charity or agency of your choice. Try not to let an opportunity to help pass by, because if we all give a little to the right agencies, they can do a better job of alleviating hunger for many children.