



Food security: Teacher notes

Case study: Malawi

This is a background study about a country with a subsistence economy, based on one single staple food crop (maize). Many schools have 'feeding programs' which encourage school attendance by using donated money from overseas to help feed children who might not otherwise come to school. Children receive a small bowl of *nsima* and broth.

Introduce the context of the activity. Show students where Malawi is on a world map and explain what subsistence farming is. You can download the *Food security: Student worksheet*.

The information provided in the background study shows that the changing African climate is making the harvest of maize 'unpredictable'. There are two parts: one to learn about Malawi's dependence on the maize crop, and one to determine the effects of climate change on that crop.

Students interpret text, tables and graphs that include mathematical data. For example, student could use a graph to contrast the 1.5 million tonnes of maize with the 0.6 million tonnes when the rains failed in 1994.



You might like to create small amounts of *nsima* for your students to sample. The closest in Australia is a polenta (porridge), supplemented with chicken broth and maybe a few pieces of chicken and cabbage. This is the Malawian staple food, eaten at all meals, usually only twice each day.

You can watch a video about Malawian maize, a maize-mill and *nsima* at www.our-africa.org/malawi/food-daily-life> and another about what one village is doing to counter climate change at www.youtube.com/watch?v=xrKOMd81N68

The internet stories include the effects of changing climate on destitute families. You may want to use them with discretion.

How will this level of food insecurity be affected by climate change?

Malawi's experiences are often traced back to the 1991/92 drought in southern Africa, which affected over six million people. Since then, the report noted, the severity of disasters has escalated.

“We had a very close look at the interactions between weather and food production in Malawi, and we certainly confirm that there is a direct link between the two,” said Rene Gommès, Senior Agro-meteorologist with the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in Rome.

Changes in rainfall patterns have affected the growing seasons and the type of crops planted, the Action Aid study found: long-season local maize varieties are no longer a preferred option, and maize normally grown in November is now being grown in December. “In the past we used to plant our crops after the first rains, but since we started experiencing frequent droughts and floods we are planting our crops much earlier,” one farmer explained.

There has also been a noticeable increase in diseases, such as malaria, cholera and dysentery, associated with changes in rainfall patterns, creating health challenges that are particularly affecting women farmers. “We now travel longer distances to fetch water, and spend most of the time in health centres instead of working in our fields,” the report quoted a female farmer as saying.

Australian Curriculum links

Year 5

Describe and interpret different data sets in context (ACMPS120)

Year 6

Interpret secondary data presented in digital media and elsewhere (ACMPS 148)

Background

www.irinnews.org/report/71726/malawi-small-farmers-hit-by-changes-in-the-climate

This statement is from *Climate Change, Food Insecurity and Hunger*

1. Climate change will act as a multiplier of existing threats to food security. By 2050, the risk of hunger is projected to increase by 10 – 20 %, and child malnutrition is anticipated to be 20 % higher compared to a no-climate change scenario.
2. Achieving food security under a changing climate requires substantial increases in food production on the one hand, as well as improved access to adequate and nutritious food and capacities to cope with the risks posed by climate change on the other hand.
3. Governments must be assisted in enhancing food production and access, scaling up social protection systems and improving their ability to prepare for and respond to disasters.
4. Community-based development processes need to be fostered in order to enable the poorest and most vulnerable to build sustainable and climate resilient livelihoods and move out of chronic poverty and food insecurity.

5. The humanitarian community must get prepared for more extreme weather events and protecting the already food insecure better by strengthening both crisis response and crisis prevention.

Technical Paper of the IASC Task Force on Climate Change

Submitted by WFP, FAO, IFRC and OXFAM, as well as WVI, CARE, CARITAS, WHO and Save the Children, 2009

www.caritas.org/includes/pdf/CaritasBarcelonaCCStat.pdf

Resources

- Worksheets: one is attached.
- The video shows Malawian maize production and grinding into flour at a maize mill.
- www.irinnews.org/report/97571/maize-smuggling-creates-hunger-in-malawi
- www.irinnews.org/report/95276/malawi-hunger-deepens-in-the-south
- www.our-africa.org/malawi

Method

You might like to create small amounts of nsima for your students to sample. The closest in Australia is a polenta (porridge), supplemented with chicken broth and maybe a few pieces of chicken and cabbage. This is the Malawian staple food, eaten at all meals, usually only twice each day.

Anne in the photograph lives in Zomba, in southern Malawi. Zomba was formerly the capital of Nyasaland – a British colony, but when Malawi became independent it changed its name and made a new capital – Lilongwe. You could help students locate Malawi on a map of Africa, where they will see a large and very deep lake (Lake Malawi). They can locate the largest city (Blantyre) where the girls' primary school pictured is located. Blantyre is named after the birth city (in Scotland) of David Livingstone, who is famous in Malawi for ending the slave trade.

The internet stories include the effects of changing climate on destitute families. You may want to use them with discretion. We need good news stories from Africa, as they are wonderful, resilient people, but good news is often hard to find.

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