

Activity: Food around the World

(2 hours)

1 of 3

FACE THE FAST

Objective

Through this activity participants will:

- learn about food in different countries
- learn how Catholic Relief Services helps people to access food
- examine access to food in different parts of the world and reflect on our own access to food

Activity Summary

This activity begins with a discussion about food that is eaten in different countries around the world and how food security plays a role in the foods people eat. Participants will discuss ways to help people become more food secure, using the work of Catholic Relief Services as an example. Finally, using a case study, participants will prepare presentations about global access to food, reasons why people experience chronic hunger and propose potential solutions.

Note: This activity contains two parts. Each part can stand alone.

Materials Needed

- *Food around the World* PowerPoint
- computer
- projector
- screen or wall to project presentation
- copy of *Barriers to Food Security Cards*
- copy of *Solutions to Food Insecurity Cards*
- *Case Studies*, one per small group
- images of different foods (see: *Suggested Images of Food*)
- pens/pencils
- markers
- magazines
- newspapers
- construction paper
- art supplies
- glue

Procedure

Part I – Food around the World (30 minutes)

Set up a computer and projector to show the *Food around the World* PowerPoint presentation. If you are unable to project the presentation, provide copies for participants. Make sure to print a copy of the presentation with the notes for yourself. These notes will help you to explain to participants what they are seeing in each slide.

While viewing each slide, ask participants the following questions:

- What food do you see? Are you familiar with this food?
- Are you surprised by anything you see? (e.g., how food is prepared, how food is eaten)

Having studied images of food from around the world, lead the participants in a discussion about food security and how Catholic Relief Services helps communities around the world access food on a regular basis to reduce hunger.

Begin this section by defining food security.

Food security means that people have access to sufficient food to lead an active and healthy life at all times. When a person does not consume a sufficient quantity (or quality) of food, we say they are food insecure.

Activity: Food around the World

(2 hours)

2 of 3

FACE THE FAST

Invite participants to share some reasons why people might not be food secure. Examples include: natural disasters, conflict, access to markets, poor harvests. Encourage participants to refer to the images of food they saw in the presentation as well as the way the food was distributed and prepared. (*Option: Invite participants to read information from the *Barriers to Food Security Cards**) Can participants think of other barriers to food security?

Explain to participants:

Catholic Relief Services, the international humanitarian agency of the Catholic community in the U.S., works in more than 100 countries to help the poor and vulnerable access nutritious food on a regular basis.

Invite participants to share ways that CRS helps communities become food secure. Examples include: education, microfinance, agriculture programs, peacebuilding. (*Option: Invite participants to read information from the *Solutions to Food Insecurity Cards**) Can participants think of other solutions to food insecurity?

Part II –Case Studies (90 minutes)

Divide participants into small groups of 5-7 people and give each group a *Case Study*. Each *Case Study* contains information about a family and what kind of food they eat. The *Case Study* also presents challenges the family faces in remaining food secure.

Note: More than one small group may use a case study if you have a very large group.

Ask groups to read through their case study and briefly discuss:

- How is this food different from what we eat? How is it similar?
- What do the similarities and differences tell us?
- How are the lives of the people in the story different from our lives?

Each group should prepare a presentation about the family and country they have studied. The presentation can include a collage, story boards, a book or a skit.

Each presentation should:

- Describe the family
- Explain why the family is not food secure
- Propose a solution to their food insecurity

Distribute magazines, newspapers, images of food (see: *Suggested Images of Food*), markers, glue and other supplies to help groups prepare their presentations.

Allow each group 5-10 minutes to present their story.

Debrief

When all groups have presented, invite the large group to discuss the following questions:

- What have you learned about access to food?
- How does our access to food differ from that of the poor?
- What are the similarities and differences in the varieties of food available to people in various communities around the world?
- As Catholics, what are our responsibilities to assist others in securing a reliable access to food?

Activity: Food around the World

(2 hours)

3 of 3

FACE THE FAST

Suggested Images of Food

Use images from the *Food around the World* PowerPoint or find some examples online, download and print pictures of the following foods for participants to use in their presentations.

- Cassava
- Okra
- Potato
- Beans
- Peanuts
- Lentils
- Sesame Seeds
- Sorghum
- Barley
- Millet
- Rice
- Corn
- Fish
- Goat
- Chicken
- Guinea fowl
- Oil
- Bulgur Wheat
- Tortillas
- Mango
- Papaya
- Banana
- Plantain

Activity: Food around the World

Barriers to Food Security Cards

FACE THE FAST

Barriers to Food Security

Natural Disasters

Natural disasters cause hunger by:

- Destroying crops (e.g., floods, drought)
- Forcing people from their homes and causing them to move to populated areas which puts a strain on food supplies
- Preventing food from getting to people or preventing people from getting to markets to buy food

Barriers to Food Security

Conflict

Conflict causes uncertainty for communities. Members of the same community sometimes fight against one another, preventing some from accessing already limited resources. An outside force can disrupt a community already suffering from poverty. Oftentimes, people are displaced during conflict, which puts a strain on limited resources in the areas where they relocate. Conflict reduces people's access to food and other resources they need to live.

Barriers to Food Security

Failed Harvests

Subsistence farmers grow the food their family will need for an entire year. Any disruption to their harvests means that a family will not have enough food to feed themselves. In addition, they will not have any surplus to generate income. Without income, children cannot go to school and families cannot save money to purchase their basic necessities.

Barriers to Food Security

Access to Markets

In the developing world, people do not always have access to markets where they can sell their surplus food or other goods. Sometimes, infrastructure does not exist to take goods from a community to a market for sale. Other times, farmers are unable to bargain for fair prices for their goods, which reduces their ability to generate an income.

Activity: Food around the World

Solutions to Food Insecurity Cards

FACE THE FAST

Solutions to Food Insecurity

Education

Education improves people's ability to secure food. Farmers receive training to improve their crop yields and to bargain for fairer prices at the market where they sell their surplus crops. Education also raises the potential that children will develop skills to help them earn higher incomes as adults.

Solutions to Food Insecurity

Microfinance

Microfinance helps poorer members of a community start their own businesses by providing access to credit. Many of the people who benefit from microfinance are women who traditionally have fewer opportunities. A new business, backed by a community loan, can increase the income potential for a family and can supplement their other income-generating activities. A family with more income can purchase food when crops fail, send their children to school, and buy necessities including medicine.

Solutions to Food Insecurity

Agriculture Programs

Helping farmers improve their agricultural techniques allows farming families to become more food secure and brings more food into markets. Training farmers to diversify their crops and livestock helps to reduce the shock to their farm if one crop fails.

Solutions to Food Insecurity

Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding projects respond to the root causes of conflict. When conflict no longer exists, members of a community can focus on their lives and ways to support their families. Communities can jointly address how to provide access to limited resources.

Activity: Food around the World

Case Studies

Handout

FACE THE FAST

Case Study: Niger

Family:

Habsu Boubacar and her husband live in Toudoun Jaka, a village in Niger, with their 4 children.

Food:

Millet or sorghum dishes prepared as porridge and covered with a vegetable sauce that occasionally contains small pieces of meat.



Photo by Lane Hartill/CRS

Situation:

Habsu Boubacar has learned how to mix water and millet husks—the stuff she normally feeds the goats and sheep—to make a sludgy drink. She has learned how to gulp the brown, gritty stuff beverage so the bitterness doesn't sit too long on her tongue. She has gotten used to the feel of it in her stomach; it takes up space, so she can feed the real food to her 4 children.

What she hasn't gotten used to is *anza*. It's famine food. The plant's fruit is so bitter and tough she must boil it several times to get the bitterness out of it. Then she adds tobacco to soften it. But she eats it, like most people do, when there's nothing else.

The rain never came to Toudoun Jaka last year, and the land withered and cracked. Habsu's millet crops shriveled and died. She wasn't able to harvest grain for herself or her 4 children.

She and her husband grappled with a single question: Do we stay or leave Toudoun Jaka? Habsu's husband, along with other men in the village, decided to go to the capital, Niamey, where they could work as part-time livestock butchers. The little cash Habsu's husband could send home would partially cover the grocery bill. God, they figured, would take care of the rest.

Habsu sold off 3 goats and 3 cows—all listless and skeletal—in order to pay for food. Only 2 goats remain.

Habsu's children eat nothing but millet mixed with water, a chalky-tasting porridge with little nutritional value. Habsu can't remember the last time she served them anything else. No fruit, meat or vegetables. Just millet porridge for every meal.

The millet Habsu planted has withered and is covered over by blowing sand. Perhaps the rain will come and soak the ground, and the millet will grow. But even then, nothing will be ready to harvest for another couple of months. So Habsu has a backup plan: the stack of dishes near her sagging four-poster bed. She will sell them to buy food.

Activity: Food around the World

Case Studies

Handout

FACE THE FAST

Case Study: Afghanistan

Family:

Gulpasha and Munir live with their 2 children in Farah, a village in Afghanistan.

Food:

Maize, barley or rice served with yogurt, nuts or vegetables.

Situation:

Gulpasha and Munir's son, Sadiqullah, became weaker and weaker because there was no food to feed him.

They traveled 185 miles from their village to the city to seek help because their village has no medicine or doctor. They had to leave their 3-year-old daughter, also weak and malnourished, back at home.

With less means to afford basic necessities, more families are selling their valuable livestock just to pay for bread. Over the past several months, Gulpasha and Munir were forced to sell their livestock to pay for food. Employment options are scarce in Farah. A drought wiped out this season's crops, leaving Gulpasha and Munir's wheat farm—and their pockets—empty. One by one, Munir began selling his animals at a fraction of their value.

"We are not growing enough food and we cannot afford food; the result is our sick children. Many other families—hundreds of children like this—are in our villages," says Munir.

With no wheat or livestock left to sell, Munir is considering going to Iran to find work, most likely as a construction worker. It would be a risk.

Migration within Afghanistan—from country to city—is also seen as a threat by some people in Herat City. They fear the newcomers may deplete more of the waning local food stocks. People who were recently subsistence farmers are now working the streets; they are coming up to car windows and asking strangers for help.



Photo by Agustinus Wibowo for CRS

Activity: Food around the World

Case Studies

Handout

FACE THE FAST

Case Study: Democratic Republic of Congo

Family:

Jolie is 22 and lives in the Walikale province of Congo with her mother and siblings.

Food:

Fufu (a thick paste made from potatoes, cassava, or other starchy food) served with sweet potatoes, perch, bananas, plantains or other vegetables or fruits in season.



Photo by Lane Hartill/CRS

Situation

Jolie's mother is in the hospital with stomach cysts.

Jolie has another problem. There is a bag of flour sitting in the dirt outside her house. Jolie walked 2 hours down the road to buy it. She paid about \$8 and turned around and hiked back with it on her head. Now it's sitting in the sun, and nobody is buying it. But even if it is sold, the 5-cent profit on each cup she sells doesn't go far.

"If people don't buy," she says, "we don't eat."

Or pay for school fees. The principal at her junior high kicked her out of school because she is behind a few months in tuition. But that's not unusual. She's getting used to it. It happened in 2002, 2004 and 2007.

But she always found a way to go back. It doesn't bother her that she's 22 years old and only in her sophomore year of high school. Staying in school is what's important. And taking care of her siblings. But this time, it's going to be harder than usual.

"When I run out of money, I'm really going to be in a bind," she says. "I might have to marry." She knows former classmates who accepted the money and the man, and are now stuck in a life they detest.

Jolie's life mirrors that of hundreds of thousands of young people across the Democratic Republic of the Congo who can't pay school fees. It's especially bad here, in this part of Walikale province. Close to 90,000 displaced families live near Ndjingala where they can find work in mines. Entire villages picked up and moved here from surrounding areas after militias rolled in and destroyed their homes. Almost all of the displaced people are poor and struggle to pay school fees.

Half the children who start school in Congo don't finish their studies.

Activity: Food around the World

Case Studies

Handout

FACE THE FAST

Case Study: Bangladesh

Family:

Khalam, his wife and 4 sons.

Food:

Rice served with lentils, known as dal.
Meals sometimes include fish.



Photo by Debashish Shom for CRS

Situation:

When Bengali fisherman Khalam saw the remains of his boat along the sand the morning after Cyclone Sidr, only one thought crossed his mind: he wished he were dead.

These coastal and predominantly fishing communities were the hardest hit by the cyclone due to the tidal surge that violently rushed a mile inland, tearing apart generations of people's work. For Khalam, that means that, when he looks out at the empty coast line, he sees nothing he can call his own — no source of food to feed his family that night; no way to earn a living the next day; no sense of calm for his anxiety about keeping his family afloat.

Like many fishermen, Khalam, 45, never went to school; his four sons (the oldest is 19 years old) have never sat in a classroom. "If I send my children to school, who will help me with the work on my boat?" he asks. Instead, they are masters of the water, their lives centered entirely on currents and the fishing potential in a bay that is just a minute's walk from where they sleep. Fishing is a dignified way of life and Khalam and his family used to earn enough — an average of \$2 a day — to get by.

"Before the cyclone, we had no problem. I caught fish, sold it, [and] my living was going on in such a way. Until we go [fishing] I don't know how to live or survive," he says.

Without a boat, and with only sand where his house once stood, Khalam feels like he's sinking. A new boat, even modest in size at 30 feet long by 4 feet wide, will cost as much as \$520. Fishing nets are the real blow, given the expensive imported materials. One net costs as much as \$1,000. Khalam already owed \$75 for his previous boat, and without any savings, his debt is likely to skyrocket.

"I have four children — sons — and a wife. I am considering a loan, but it will be on the high interest. The loan sharks ask for payment in fish and pay at the bottom rate," he says.

"Without a boat, how will we live? This is our only profession," he says. "With our boat broken, our life is broken."

Activity: Food around the World

Case Studies

Handout

FACE THE FAST

Case Study: Guatemala

Family:

Eleven-month-old Brandon Sandoval and his parents

Food:

Corn tortillas served with rice and beans.



Photo by Robyn Fieser/CRS

Situation:

Brandon weighs just 9.5 pounds. Eleven days ago he was admitted to the National Hospital Nicolasa Cruz in the department of Jalapa. He is one of 16 children currently being treated for malnutrition and related illnesses at the hospital.

Since May 2009, Guatemala's East Central Pacific departments—an area known as the *Corredor Seco* (dry corridor)—have experienced irregular rainfall and drought. At least 25 children in the area have died of malnutrition and thousands of families, their crops devastated by the drought, run the risk of going hungry.

According to local reports, families in the departments of Baja Verapaz, Chiquimula, El Progreso, Jalapa, Jutiapa, Santa Rosa and Zacapa have lost between 50 and 80 percent of their yearly bean and maize crops. Many attribute this year's erratic rainfall and excessively hot, dry conditions in Guatemala to an "El Niño" phenomenon intensified by global climate change.

"This current crisis highlights how poor farmers are unable to grow sufficient food due to shifting weather patterns and the deforestation of their land. Their families, especially the children, suffer. In addition to providing critical food assistance in this time of need, we must also support farmers in recovering from the failed harvest and reducing their vulnerability in the future," says Karen Latham, head of CRS programs in Guatemala.