FAMINE

2007 RESOURCE PACKS

WHAT IS FAMINE?

Famine occurs when there is a severe shortage of food and people cannot find enough nutritious food to eat, resulting in widespread malnutrition and starvation.

Poverty is the main cause of hunger. Every year, developing countries suffer what is known as a 'hunger gap', which is the time just after crops have been planted, when food reserves have been used up. How do these periods of food shortages turn into famine?

- ***Poverty*** – when food is in short supply, the cost rises and many people cannot afford to eat.
- ***Drought –*** crops depend on the rain to grow.
- ***Conflict*** – in conflict situations, people are often driven away from their homes and farms and because of this, they cannot tend to their land.
- ***Poor governance*** – exporting too much food and not responding to impending famine quickly enough.
- ***Poor agriculture*** – many countries rely on one staple crop and do not plant a variety of crops to increase chances of a good harvest.

Famine occurs when several of these factors are made worse by governments' failure to deal with the situation.

HOW DOES GOAL RESPOND TO FAMINE?

In the event of a famine, GOAL sends an experienced team into the country to deliver food and medical supplies. This team is made up of aid workers who have experience in this area, including medical staff, a nutritionist, a team leader and a logistician, which is someone who sources supplies, such as transport for example, and organises their delivery.

GOAL travels to the worst affected areas, where we distribute highly nutritious food supplements to the most vulnerable members of the community. One such supplement is called UNIMIX, which is a porridge-like food, rich in protein and specifically tailored for malnourished children.

A malnourished child in Niger is treated by GOAL.

Malnutrition occurs when children do not have enough food to eat and their bodies are too weak to fight off infections. Malnourished children do not grow as fast as healthy children

so they will generally be shorter and lighter than they should be for their age.

GOAL measures and weighs each child to see if they are malnourished. When a group of children are found to be malnourished, aid workers use a MUAC (Middle Upper Arm Circumference) bracelet to assess the nutritional status of children in the group.

GOAL sets up supplementary feeding centres, where we provide medical assistance and special food to especially vulnerable groups such as to malnourished children, pregnant women and women who are breastfeeding.

If people have left their homes in search of help, they need basics for survival including food, access to clean water, shelter, healthcare and sanitation.

A GOAL health worker uses the MUAC method to assess a sick child in Uganda.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PREVENT FAMINE?

The world's population is estimated to reach 10 billion by 2050, so the challenge of preventing famine is not going to go away.

GOAL works closely with local communities to try to prevent famine occurring. GOAL provides farmers with seeds, tools and livestock during times of shortage and has established livelihood fairs, where farmers can exchange GOAL vouchers for these essential items which allows them to grow their own crops and tend to their own animals again.

GOAL also supports programmes that help people become self sufficient. Giving people training and support allows them to earn their own money.

We can all do our bit to support developing countries. One way of doing this is to buy Fair Trade products in the supermarket.

"Before you finish eating your breakfast this morning you've depended on half the world. This is the way our universe is structured… We aren't going to have peace on earth until we recognise this basic fact" Martin Luther King Jr.

Many of the products on our supermarket shelves are produced in the Third World. However, the people who produce these products are underpaid and cannot afford to feed their own families. Purchasing products with the Fair Trade mark ensures that we support small and marginalised producers in the Third World and ensure that they get a decent profit for their work.

GOAL sends emergency supplies overseas.

A GOAL supported school feeding programme in Nsanje village.

IN SHORT...

...we urgently need to address the following:

• ***Improve health and education services***, as this is found to have the greatest effect on reducing poverty and poverty is the greatest cause of hunger.

• ***Increase economic growth*** in developing world countries – improve infrastructures and communicationst to increase agricultural output.

• ***Redress the imbalance between the world's richest and the poorest countries*** – rich countries must trade fairly with those who are poor.

Families receive monthly food supplies from GOAL.

GOAL's medical staff measure a child's height to see if he is malnourished.

IRELAND'S FAMINE HISTORY

Our own history shows us how complex a situation famine can be.

The Great Famine occurred between 1845 and 1848, and although it began as a natural disaster when potato blight destroyed the staple crop, the situation was made much worse by the inaction of the Government of the day.

The famine killed about one million people in Ireland and forced hundreds of thousands to emigrate to Britain and America.

Can you see any similarities between Ireland's experience of famine and those countries affected by famine today?

What are they?

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

• Learn more about countries affected by famine or food shortages

• Learn more about the causes of hunger

• Learn more about GOAL's work in response to all of these issues.

DID YOU KNOW?

10 pre school children die from malnutrition every minute - this figure has not changed since early 1980s (UN)

826 million people in the world are undernourished. (Development Co-operation Ireland [DCI]: 2005)

Nearly one in four people, 1.2 billion - a majority of humanity - live on less than $1 a day. (DCI: 2005)

In Ethiopia, where GOAL has been working since 1984, the calorie intake for half of the population is below the recomended minimum. (DCI: 2004)

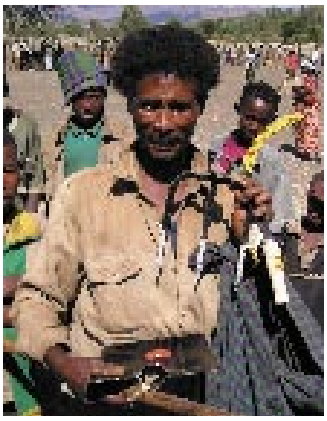
Since the founding of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 1945, it is estimated that 400 million people have died from hunger and poor sanitation, more than 3 times the number of people killed in wars fought during the entire 20th century. (FAO)

CASE STUDY

West Hararghe, a region in Ethiopia, was badly affected by a devastating drought in 2002 and 2003. GOAL provided emergency assistance to the population during that time.

However, after the rains returned in late 2003, many farmers had lost all their livestock, tools and grain stocks and were struggling to start farming again. GOAL has organised Seed and Livelihood Fairs in many communities, helping farmers to get their small farms going again.

GOAL gives farmers vouchers worth €6.50. Local vendors attend the fairs to exchange seeds, tools and small livestock for vouchers. After the fair, GOAL reimburses the vendors with cash for the vouchers. As the vendors are also local people, the money goes back into the local economy.



Mohammed Aley

I have come from Oda Tuta village to the GOAL livliehood fair. I have some seed already but am very much in need of tools and have purchased a spade, sickle and fork.

I have half a hectare of land. At the seed fair in August 2004 I purchased wheat and other seeds. The rains last year were not very good and I didn't harvest as much as I hoped but it kept me and my family going.

GOAL'S DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION OFFICERS

GOAL aims to increase young people's awareness and understanding of the plight of the poorest of the poor and of global issues that affect the developing world.

GOAL's development education officers visit primary and post primary schools, third level institutions and youth and after-school groups to share information on their first hand experiences of working with GOAL in the developing world.

If you would like a member of our development education staff to visit your school please contact GOAL on 01 2809779, visit www.goal.ie or email info@goal.ie

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