

# Hunger Facts: Interactive Activity

**Learning objective:** to have students learn more about world hunger and open up discussion to the injustice of poverty and hunger

**Recommended grade level:** grades 4-9, ages 9-14

**Subjects:** social studies / global issues, geography (human), math

**Skills:** critical thinking, interpretation of information, math

**Recommended time:** 10-15 minutes

**Number of participants:** at least 10  
**Materials:** no additional resources

## Activity:

This is a script for an interactive hunger facts activity. Explanation points are included. Questions are in **bold**, and answers in *italics*.

- Select eight volunteers and ask them to stand up in front of the class.

Explain: these 8 people represent all the people on the planet.

**What is the population of the world?** *7 billion*

If these 8 people represented the entire population of the world, **how many of these 8 people do you think would live with chronic hunger?** *1 in 8* (Ask 1 student to step forward.)

**How many people do you think that is, if there are 7 billion people on the planet and 1 in 8 is hungry?** *There are 805 million people on the planet who live with chronic hunger. This is about 23 times the population of Canada (which is 34.8 million).*

Invite two more students to stand with the others. Explain that these 10 people now represent all the hungry people of the world.

**How many was that again?** *805 million*

**How many of these people would be from the continent of Africa?** *2.5* (Have 3 students stand forward. One of the students can be on his or her knees). About 1/4 of all hungry people.

**How many would be from the continent of Asia?** *6.5* (Have 7 students stand forward. One of the students can be on his or her knees). Well over half of all hungry people live in the continent of Asia!

**Anyone know why?** *Asia has a very high population.*  
Ask the remaining 1 person to stand forward.

**Who does this person represent?** *This person represents all the people in Latin America, Europe, North America and Australia/New Zealand who live with chronic hunger.*

**Given that about 50% of the population of the planet are women/girls, how many do you think would be women/girls?** *6* (Ask 6 students to stand forward)

**What does this tell you?** *There are more women and girls who are hungry than men and boys.*

**What percentage of hungry people would be farmers?** 7 (Ask 7 students to stand forward.)

How many of these people would be children under the age of five? 2 (165 million) (Ask 2 students to stand forward.)

**And finally, if the ten volunteers represent all the food produced in the world every year, how much of that food is wasted, meaning that it is never eaten?** *About 40 percent* (Ask 4 students to sit down on the floor.)

Thank the volunteers and invite them to sit down.

## Discussion questions:

These questions work well for the entire class or for small groups.

- **Which of these statistics surprised you the most?**
- **Why would farmers be hungry?**

In many rural areas around the world, when people do not have money to buy food or have prospects for employment they grow food or raise livestock in order to be able to feed themselves and their families, as their families have done for generations. However, in many cases they farm on a small plot of land, barely making enough to eat or sell in the market.

Many other factors also contribute to farmers being hungry such as unfair market practices, degraded land, conflict, and climate change. Recently, climate change is one of the biggest issues facing farmers in developing countries. Climate change is making weather patterns unpredictable, and increasing the frequency and intensity of droughts and floods, as well as tropical storms. Since farming is so dependent upon the weather, these changes in the climate have big implications for vulnerable farmers.
- **Why would there be more women who are hungry than men?**

When there is not enough food, women will often go without in order to feed their children. In addition, women, especially pregnant or nursing mothers, require more nutrition which sometimes they cannot access.

In many places women are still not treated as equals to men. Because of this inequality, women often do not

have the same access to resources as men. For instance, many women are farmers, but female farmers do not have the same rights as male farmers. The UN estimates that if women farmers had the same access to resources as men, the number of hungry people in the world could be reduced by up to 150 million.

- **What can happen if very young children do not get enough to eat?**

Proper nutrition is particularly important for children who are growing and developing. They need a wide variety of nutrients to ensure healthy development. Children who do not get enough food are at a higher risk for disease, since a lack of food weakens the immune system. The first two years of life are a particularly important time for good nutrition. The effects of poor nutrition during the first one thousand days of life can be irreversible. Enough healthy food (including micronutrients) and proper healthcare for very young children create a strong foundation for a healthy life.
- **Why is food wasted?**

In most developing countries, food is lost “post-harvest”, meaning that it never makes it to the consumer but is spoiled because of a lack of storage facilities, transportation to markets, etc.

In most industrialized counties (like Canada), the majority of food waste occurs at a consumer/retail level. Individuals throw out food because they don’t like it, don’t use it or (often mistakenly) think that it has gone bad. Also, major grocery stores will often discard or reject perfectly edible produce (fruit and vegetables) because customers will not like its appearance (i.e. size, colour) or because it is past the due date.
- **Why should we be concerned about food waste?**

At the same time as 805 million people in the world go hungry, wasting food also means that precious natural resources, such as large amounts of land, energy, and water, are being wasted as well. It is especially a problem for those farmers whose income depends on getting their crops to market.
- **What can we do about food waste?**

In Canada, we can buy only the food that we need and eat what we buy, as much as possible. Students can make sure to eat their lunches so that no food goes to waste.

Canadians can also support agencies that help farmers in developing countries store and transport their crops.

*Thanks to PWRDF for contributing to this resource!*