

Climate Change & Hunger Object Lesson

Would you like to communicate the challenges that climate change poses for smallholder farmers in an interesting way? PowerPoint presentations, graphs, and maps might work for policy wonks, but they're hardly memorable for most people!

Try using an object lesson or make up a game to illustrate the links between climate change and hunger. Have some fun! Below is one example of how you might do this.

Juggling Climate Risks

You'll need:

- ✓ several balls or hacky sacks (they can be different sizes, but keep them relatively small – you might even include a Frisbee or two);
- ✓ A volunteer from the group or audience

Your script would go something like this:

- We're going to demonstrate some of the challenges of small-scale farmers in an age of climate change (*call up a volunteer – someone who's good at catching will also make the point very well*); you just need to catch the ball as I throw it to you and set it down;
- Imagine you're a Canadian farmer. Climate variability is a challenge for all farmers. You never know when you will have an abnormally rainy year, or when a hail storm will flatten your crop, or an early frost cause loss. (*Lob one of the balls to your volunteer. Congratulate them for the "excellent job of handling the risks"*);
- Climate change models suggest increasing variability in our weather. We're already seeing that around the world. But models also show Canada may benefit as the weather warms (at least up till 2 degrees) and seasons grow longer. We may be able to expand our cropland northward, enjoy longer seasons, and find new markets. (*Just look over at your volunteer and give a thumbs up*);
- Farmers in Canada also have the benefit of regular weather forecasting services, imperfect as they are, and crop insurance and emergency programs, also imperfect, to help when harvests do fail or land can't be planted. (*Lob another ball*);
- Now imagine you're a farmer in sub-Saharan Africa with one hectare of cropland. Climate change models suggest that any warming at all will have negative impacts for smallholder farmers in developing countries. Often you are already growing crops at the top temperature threshold so an additional degree on average could well do more harm than good. (*Toss another ball*);
- Plus, climate variability is a challenge for you just as it is for Canadian farmers. Drought is an increasingly big concern for Canadian Foodgrains Bank partners in Africa. One year of drought can be difficult for you. (*Throw a ball – a little bit harder*);

- But, like our partners are telling us, those droughts are starting to happen more and more frequently (*Throw two or three balls one after another*). You might have the resources to recover after one drought but not after successive years of drought. You might have to sell your cows or other resources which will make it even harder the next time drought hits (*Throw another ball*);
- Now put one hand behind your back. That's because you don't have any crop insurance as protection against drought or floods or other extreme weather. (*Throw a ball*).
- And your weather forecasting services are minimal so you don't know what to prepare for in the short-term. And the planting advice that has been passed down through generations isn't valid anymore. Close one eye. (*Throw a ball or two*). I can see it's getting harder and harder for you!
- You also don't have access to good climate change advice. Too few studies are done in your country. Too little money is available for research. And much more needs to be done to help farmers adapt to the changes you're already experiencing. Close your other eye. After all, it's pretty hard to flourish with two eyes closed and an arm behind your back. (*Throw some more balls for emphasis. Gently!*)
- **That's why Canadian Foodgrains Bank is calling for Canada to commit to financing that helps smallholder farmers adapt to climate change. They are truly on the frontlines of this crisis. Let's stand with them however we can!**