Skits: Walk a mile in their shoes

Objective: To help students understand various causes of hunger and how organizations like Canadian Foodgrains Bank are responding.

Skills: reading comprehension, analysis, team work, public speaking/performing, creativity, interpretation of information, geography, vocabulary

Recommended time: 60-90 minutes (depending on the size of the class and number of skits performed)

Recommended grade level: Grades 8-12, Ages 14-young adult

Number of participants: 6-35 (approximate)

Materials: The included case studies, perhaps some props for the skits, world map (optional)

Activity:

The case studies in this activity are based on real people who are involved in projects supported by Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

• Divide the students into small groups of 4-6 people.

• Give each group a case study and tell the groups that they are to perform a skit based on the case study that has been assigned to them. By interpreting the case studies in the form of skits students will gain a better understanding of the content of the case studies than if they were simply to read them.

• Students should have about 15-25 minutes to prepare their skits.

• You may wish to read over the vocabulary words with the students or just provide the list to them as they prepare their skits.

• You may wish to show the students where the countries in the case studies are located on a world map.

• Seven case studies are provided. You can choose to use all of them or as many as you need. If you choose not to use all of them it is recommended that you use case studies with different letters assigned to them (A, B, C, D) as to demonstrate different problems and responses.

• Be sure to talk about the skits, either immediately after each performance or after all performances. Feel free to use the questions provided, in addition to your own.

Instructions for students

Each skit should:

• Be about 5 minutes in length.

• Clearly identify the issue(s) and the response(s).

• Have an introduction and conclusion.

• Include all of the students (if there are not enough speaking roles, students could be other people or objects in the skit).

You may add characters as you see fit. You may also create names for people mentioned in the stories or for characters that you add. Props are encouraged. At the end of the skit, you should be prepared to discuss the case study with the class.
**Background Information for Educators**

Canadian Foodgrains Bank is a partnership of 15 churches and church agencies working together to end global hunger. Our vision is a world where everyone has enough to eat. We believe that every person is created by God and that God doesn't want anyone to go hungry.

Canadian Foodgrains Bank, in conjunction with its members and their partners around the world, works to end global hunger by:

- Supporting international programs to meet immediate food needs, reduce malnutrition, and achieve sustainable food security.
- Influencing improvements in national and international policies that contribute to ending global hunger.
- Increasing and deepening the engagement of Canadians in efforts to end global hunger.

Internationally, Foodgrains Bank works through its members to do three types of programming:

**Food Assistance** is the distribution of food, tools, agricultural inputs (like fertilizer) or cash or food vouchers to those who are in need. Usually, Canada purchases food in the region where it is to be distributed. Buying food locally, as opposed to shipping it from Canada, benefits or reduces harm to the local economy. Also, food purchased locally is usually more culturally appropriate.

**Food Security** programs help people become more food secure in the longer-term—providing programs that build people's capacity to produce and acquire food. For example, learning a new farming technique.

**Nutrition** programs include nutrition education, water and sanitation projects, and provision of clean water to combat water borne diseases.

Since 1983, Canadian Foodgrains Bank has worked in over 80 countries around the world. Canadian Foodgrains Bank receives donations from supporters (individuals, churches, schools, etc.) and funding from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). A unique aspect of the Foodgrains Bank are community growing projects, which find groups of people from various churches and communities coming together to plant, tend and harvest a field for the Foodgrains Bank. Following harvest, the crop is sold and the proceeds are donated to the Foodgrains Bank.

The members of Canadian Foodgrains Bank are:
- ADRA Canada (Adventist Development and Relief Agency)
- Canadian Baptist Ministries
- Canadian Catholic Organization for Development & Peace
- Canadian Lutheran World Relief
- Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada
- Evangelical Missionary Alliance in Canada
- Mennonite Central Committee Canada
- Nazarene Compassionate Ministries Canada
- Emergency Relief & Development Overseas (Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada)
- Presbyterian World Service & Development
- Primate's World Relief & Development Fund (Anglican Church of Canada)
- The Salvation Army
- United Church of Canada
- World Relief Canada
- World Renew (formerly Christian Reformed World Relief Committee)

**Post Skit Questions**

Some additional information for teachers/leaders is given after select questions. This information is based on all 7 of the case studies.

**In which countries do these case studies take place?**
Haiti, India, Laos, Niger, Pakistan, Zimbabwe

**What are some of the causes of hunger and food insecurity described in the skits?**
Lack of educational and employment opportunities, lack of arable land to grow food, drought or lack of rain and monsoon rains (which could be a result of climate change), poverty, ineffective farming methods, deforestation.

**What are some of the responses to these problems?**
There are 4 types of responses highlighted in the case studies:
- Food distribution: Case Studies labeled A
- Food-for-work projects: Case Studies labeled B
- Food security workshops: Case Studies labeled C
- Income generating projects: Case Study labeled D
Why do you think many of the skits are about women?
Many of the Foodgrains Bank’s programs focus on women. This is because women account for more than half of the world’s farmers but are often more disadvantaged than their male counterparts.

They are often at higher risk of malnutrition for a variety of reasons. When hunger comes to a community or family, women are often the first to go without food, often giving up their share for their children.

Women are often the primary or sole caregivers to their families. Sometimes husbands must leave their families to work elsewhere.

How do you think the projects described in the case studies are funded?
Canadian Foodgrains Bank provides financial support for these projects, and other projects like them. The money comes from individual donors and fundraising groups in Canada (such as schools, churches or community groups), as well as from generous funding by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). CIDA is Canada’s lead agency for relief and development assistance, allocating resources to help people living in poverty. In most cases, Foodgrains Bank and its members also work with local organizations to administer the projects.

Do you think that it is important that Canadian Christians support projects like these? Why or why not?

How did you feel acting out a situation from someone else’s life?

What did you learn about hunger from performing the skit and watching the other skits?
Case Study 1: In Search of Leaves

Ramatou is a widow and mother of twelve children who lives in Niger. Niger is an arid country on the edge of the Sahara desert in West Africa. The last four years have been a constant struggle for Ramatou because she has not always had enough food to feed her family.

This year was particularly bad. Ramatou’s crops were very poor; she only harvested enough millet to feed her family for 2 or 3 months but her field will not produce more food for at least another 6 months. Normally when times are tough she receives help from her brother-in-law, but he also had no food. There was nothing left to eat.

After Ramatou ran out of food, she started begging. She went from house to house in the village asking for help. But there was nothing left in the whole village. Facing starvation, she began looking in the bushes for leaves. After collecting leaves, she would soak them in water and boil them. Since she wasn’t sure if they were safe to eat, she would eat some first. If she didn’t get sick, she would then feed them to her children.

The leaves filled their stomachs, but didn’t provide sufficient nutrition for the children, who grew weaker each day. Fortunately, people from other communities and other countries knew that many people in Niger, like Ramatou, were suffering. An aid group came to her community to give food rations to those who were at risk of starving because of the drought. Ramatou received enough millet, black eyed peas, and oil to last her family for a month. The help was greatly appreciated, especially this year, when the country is caught in drought. Ramatou will receive rations for the next few months.

The donated food came along just in time. After receiving the food Ramatou said, “before we had food, the children could only lie down. They had no energy. But now they can play again.”

Since receiving her first ration a month ago, Ramatou now has more energy and feels less stress about her children. She is also starting to think about the future; she is planning to borrow some seeds to plant again next year, and is hoping to have a better harvest. She also wants her children to remember how they were helped. After they got their ration, she made up a song that she sang to her children so they always remember that they have been helped.
Case Study 2: A Family Reunited

Mian and his family live in northern Pakistan, an area which is very mountainous. A few years ago, monsoon rains began pouring down and mudslides were dangerously close to his house. Mian’s brother Amir urged him and his family to leave their house and stay at his home, which was further away from the affected area.

At first, Mian refused. He was too proud to accept help from his brother Amir, whom he had not spoken to for many years because of a dispute over an inheritance. However, Mian’s house began to crumble and Amir continued to urge him to leave. Mian finally decided to send his wife, Fatima, and their two children to live with Amir and his family.

However, Mian still refused to go himself. He remained on his land to watch over his house. However, the rains kept getting worse. Amir returned again and again, finally convincing Mian to join the rest of the family. Shortly after Mian left, a part of his house was washed away in a mudslide.

Mian and his family lived with Amir and his family for several months. Though he was thankful for their hospitality, Mian was eager to return to his land to begin rebuilding his life. However, he could not afford to feed his family because he had lost his crop in the monsoon. In addition to that, the rains had caused food prices to rise in the area. These added expenses came at a tough time.

Local and international organizations knew that people like Mian and his family were in need of help. They distributed food rations to Mian which contained rice, wheat flour, lentils, oil, sugar, and salt. This helped him until he could produce food again for his family. It made a big difference to Mian and his family while they were rebuilding their home and replanting their small plot of land.
Case Study 3:
“Now I am Enjoying Family Life”

Bishu used to leave his family in a remote village in the dry area of eastern India twice a year to travel 24 hours to the city of Delhi in search of work. He would stay in the city up to three months at a time, making a living performing odd jobs at factories. It was the only way he could provide for his wife, Bishni, and their two young sons.

“There was no other way because there were no other employment opportunities in my community at that time and we didn't have enough food saved from the harvest,” Bishu says. “I had to go away in order to make money to feed my wife and two children.”

Today, things are changed for Bishu. A few years ago, he heard about a plan to dig a large reservoir in his village. Local villagers would be hired to do the work through a food-for-work program. Not only would they be paid in rice, but the reservoir would mean water to irrigate their small fields and help them grow more food. He jumped at the chance to help out and moved back to his community to be with his family.

The villagers had wanted the reservoir because of repeated years of drought. Before, they were heavily dependent on rains to water their fields. While they could grow rice in the main rainy season, there was not enough rain to plant a second crop in the dry season—which is why many men, like Bishnu, were forced to migrate for work.

Many men and women from the village worked to dig the reservoir, using simple shovels and hoes—no small task considering the reservoir was the size of several large swimming pools!

The reservoir immediately filled up naturally from underground springs, and has remained filled with rainwater. Last year, during the dry season, villagers rented a pump to irrigate their fields from water in the reservoir.

The villagers also saved money to purchase fish for the reservoir. Once the fish are fully grown, the villagers will catch them, eat some and sell the rest for profit. The money they earn will go towards buying a pump to irrigate their fields so that they don't have to keep renting one.

This year during the dry season, Bishu and Bishni grew maize (corn), beans, potatoes and some mustard on their small plot of land. Combined with the rice they grew during the rainy season, and the rice they earned digging the reservoir, they have more food than they have had in years. Now they’re eating three meals a day, compared to two meals previously, and have stored dried vegetables in their home. They were also able to build a small extension to their house because of the money that they had saved.

“When Bishnu was away in Delhi I felt very insecure with the two children,” says Bishni, adding that his long stays away from home were hard on the family. “Now I am very happy.”

“Now we have a pond and I can cultivate my land,” adds Bishu. “I will never go to Delhi to work again. Now I am enjoying family life.”
Case Study 4: Paddy Rice vs. Upland Rice

According to the United Nations, 80 percent of the people in the country of Laos are small-scale farmers. Still, access to land is an ongoing challenge; only five percent of the land is arable land—much of the country is mountainous, inaccessible by road or unsafe for agriculture, due to unexploded bombs left in fields from years of conflict. The result? Many families do not have enough land and water to produce enough rice for their families. Many people suffer from chronic food insecurity.

For small-scale farmers in Laos, like Kao, a 59 year-old widow and mother of three, making ends meet is difficult. Kao’s family is the poorest in her village. She has been working tirelessly on her land but she is the only one in the family who can work the family’s fields. Her oldest child struggles with health issues, her middle son is working as a day labourer to make some money for the family, and her youngest child is in school.

One reason that Kao struggled to feed her family was because she grew ‘upland rice’ on a hillside. Compared to the better ‘paddy rice’, which is grown in flat, irrigated fields known as ‘paddy fields’, growing ‘upland rice’ is difficult and produces less rice. Paddy rice produces two crops a year, while upland rice only produces one. This is mainly because rice grows best in wet conditions and the upland rice is dependent on rain fall as it cannot retain water in the field like paddy rice.

To be able to feed her family, she became involved in a food-for-work project. She helped build irrigation canals and clear old tree stumps in fields in exchange for rice. This met her immediate needs, but it was not a long-term solution because the project was only temporary.

Without access to good farmland, Kao struggled to provide food and other necessities for her family, especially when there was no work available through the food-for-work project. But this year, she received a piece of paddy land from the local government to clear and cultivate. “I’m very happy to get this paddy,” says Kao.

Land given by the government has to be cleared and planted within a short period of time or it is lost. This was too much work for Kao to do alone in such a short period of time. Luckily, because of the food-for-work project, other villagers are helping Kao keep her new land by helping her clear and plant her land.

Looking ahead, Kao is hopeful that she will soon have more food for her family. Once all of her paddy land is cleared and planted, she will produce enough rice for her family to eat. She will also have enough to sell in exchange for money that she can use for other needs, like if a family member gets sick and she needs to pay for medicine.
Case Study 5: A Cow and Four Walls

Today when Moyo walks through her lush field she sees healthy cornstalks. Moyo, who was once dependent on food assistance has seen her life transformed by a simple farming practice called conservation farming. “My lifestyle is really changed. I used to work very hard and my crop produced very little,” she says.

Moyo participates in a project which carries out workshops to teach conservation farming techniques to hundreds of farmers across Zimbabwe. This is Moyo’s third year participating in the project which is based in a region of Zimbabwe where drought, food insecurity and poverty are common.

Conservation farming depends on four key practices:
• Disturbing the soil as little as possible. For instance, instead of ploughing the entire field seeds are placed in small holes prepared by simple tools like hoes.
• Covering the soil with mulch, such as straw and leaves, to keep the soil moist and to help the health of the soil.
• Planting different crops every year to replace nutrients in the soil and to prevent pests that can destroy crops.
• Sticking to a strict schedule for practices like planting, weeding and harvesting.

Farmers who use conservation farming methods have healthier fields and are able to grow more food than other farmers. Last year, Moyo’s harvest on her plot of corn was so plentiful that she was able to buy a cow and the cement to start building a brick house with four walls.

Like Moyo, many of the farmers in the project are women. Rosemary Spence, a woman from another community, was amazed by what women farmers like Moyo have accomplished. “I’m also a woman and I can also do it. Go girls!” she said.

Back on Moyo’s farm, her plot is neatly tended, each plant is evenly spaced and a thick layer of mulch covers the soil. Now she too is teaching her neighbours about conservation farming. Meanwhile, she has gone from being a regular recipient of food assistance to sharing seeds and food with others.

She knows that now her field will provide money to feed her and her 14 year old son, buy medicine for her new cow and material to roof her new house.
Tenais welcomed family members from the city. However, he was concerned that he would use all of the food that he had stored for the future to feed his guests. When he heard about a free training project for farmers in his community, he jumped at the chance to take part. The training project was led by a local Haitian farmers’ association. They helped farmers learn new techniques such as how to make fertilizer from compost and homemade pesticide from locally available resources, how to prepare seedlings, and new techniques for saving seeds.

Tenais participated in these workshops and immediately starting implementing what he learned on his own farm. He was amazed and encouraged that by using these techniques he was able to increase his yield! Now he is a leader in the project, helping to encourage other farmers to adopt these techniques. When he has visitors, he proudly shows them his crops and is happy to inform them that he now has more food to both feed his family and to sell in the market.
Case Study 7: Her Own Business

Niger is an arid country in West Africa located near the edge of the Sahara desert. Life is not easy in this country, especially for women. While women in Niger are responsible for feeding their families, they have few educational and income generating opportunities available to them.

There are no easy solutions to the complex problems that women in Niger face every day. But there are small successes that are helping to improve life for some women and their families.

Hadiza and her husband, Mohammed, have 21 mouths to feed, including five nieces and nephews they are responsible for. They try their best to manage, but usually they have only been able to provide one meal a day.

With the help of some local and international organizations, women’s groups were formed to give women in Hadiza’s community access to income and capital.

The groups encourage women to save money as a group and then to give small loans to fellow members. Hadiza participated in such a group and got an idea of how she could generate some extra money to support her family. She was able to get a loan, through the group, which she used to start a small shop selling rice and masa, a pancake-like breakfast food made out of millet.

The women’s groups also provide training to women, many of whom have never attended school. Through the group, Hadiza learned how to grow vegetables in her small garden. During the harvest, when there is a lot of food, Hadiza dries some of her produce in the sun so that it can be stored and eaten during the dry season when there often isn’t enough to eat.

Hadiza is proud of her successes saying that now her family eats two meals a day.
Vocabulary

The numbers after the definition correspond to the case studies in which the vocabulary appears.

**Arable land**: Land that is suitable for farming. (4)

**Arid**: Severely dry to the point that the land is not suitable for farming or plant life. (1,7)

**Capital**: Any form of wealth capable of being used to produce more wealth. For instance, in order to sell lemonade one must first have money to be able to buy the ingredients, the cups, the signs to advertise, etc. Once the lemonade is sold, it should bring in more money than what was originally spent to buy the ingredients, the cups, the signs to advertise, etc. (7)

**Chronic**: Continuing a long time or happening often. (4,6)

**Crop**: A field of plants that is grown to be harvested as food, feed for animals, fuel or for any other economic purpose. For instance, a farmer may plant crops of corn, potatoes or wheat to sell at the market. (1,2,3,4,5,6)

**Cultivate**: To prepare land in order to plant and grow a crop. (3,4)

**Day labourer**: Someone who doesn’t have a steady job but who is hired and paid each day, often on projects involving manual labour. (4)

**Drought**: A long period of dry weather. Because plants need moisture (rain, melted snow) to grow droughts can often lead to food shortages. (1,3,5)

**Fertilizer**: A substance added to a crop to make it grow better. Fertilizers can be synthetic (man-made) or organic (natural-like manure). (6)

**Food Assistance**: The distribution of food, tools, agricultural inputs (like fertilizer) or cash or food vouchers to those who are in need of food. (5)

**Food security**: When all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life. **Food insecurity** would be when this is not the case. (4,5,6)

**Harvest**: (noun) 1. What a farmer has grown and harvested in a year or growing season. 2. When farmers pick or cut plants after they have finished growing for the season. (verb) 1. To pick or cut plants after they have finished growing. In Canada, this is usually done in the fall after the plants have had time to grow during the spring and summer months. (1,3,5,7)

**Hoe**: A hand-held gardening tool used to break up the surface of the ground, destroy weeds, etc. (3,5)

**Income generating**: Activities that are done to produce money. For instance, running a lemonade stand is an incoming generating activity. (7)

**Inheritance**: Something (like land, money, goods, etc.) that is passed on to another person upon the death of an individual. For instance, when a father dies his land or money may be passed on to his children. (2)

**Irrigate**: To supply fields with water by artificial means (as opposed to naturally like rain). For instance, to use a sprinkler system, by diverting streams, or using an irrigation canal. (3,4)

**Irrigation canal**: A waterway built to carry water from a water source, like a lake, to a field. (4)

**Loan**: Money which is given to a person temporarily, often for capital. (see capital). The money must always be paid back, either the entire amount or with more than what was given. For instance, if one does not have enough money to buy cups for a lemonade stand s/he may need to get a loan from another person. Once s/he has made some money selling lemonade, the money will be paid back. (7)

**Migrate**: To move or relocate within a country. (3)

**Millet**: A type of grain, mostly grown in the developing world. (1,7)

**Monsoon rains**: A storm consisting of heavy rains and wind. (2)
Mudslide: Fast moving soil, rocks and water that flow down hills and mountain slopes during a heavy downpour of rain. (2)

Mulch: Organic materials (like grass clippings, straw, etc) which can be used to cover soil to conserve moisture and prevent erosion. (5)

Paddy field: A wet piece of flat, arable land used for growing rice. (4)

Pest: An insect or other small animal that harms or destroys garden plants, trees, etc. (5,6)

Pesticide: Substances or a mixture of substances intended for preventing, destroying, or repelling pests. Farmer put it on their crops to prevent their crops from being damaged or destroyed by pests. (6)

Produce: (noun) Farm products, particularly those grown in a garden like fresh fruits and vegetables. (7)

Ration: A ration is a fixed amount of food given to a person in times of need. Rations are distributed at refugee camps or to communities who are facing severe food shortages. Rations change from situation to situation. Sometimes food is distributed ‘wet’ or already cooked, other times ‘dry’ rations are given, which people cook on their own. Also known as a Food Ration. (1,2)

Reservoir: An area in which to store large amounts of water. (3)

Retain: To keep, to conserve. (4)

Seedlings: Young plants that have grown from seeds, especially those that are grown and cared for with other young plants before they are transplanted (planted elsewhere). (6)

Small-scale farmer: A farmer who has a small plot of land for growing food for personal consumption and for producing a small crop to sell for income. Also known as a subsistence farmer. (4)

Soil fertility: The health of the soil. The more fertile, the better the soil is for growing crops. (6)

Standstill: A stop (6)

Yield: The amount produced from a crop. (6)

Widow: A woman whose husband has died. (1,4)