



# CHALLENGING CONDITIONS

*Exploring the Lives of Subsistence  
Farmers in the Developing World*



Canadian  
Foodgrains  
Bank

A Christian Response  
to Hunger

# Challenging Conditions

## Exploring the Lives of Subsistence Farmers in the Developing World

### Canadian Foodgrains Bank

This activity invites students to explore what life is like for subsistence farmers in the developing world, by introducing them to a character and various aspects of his/her life. Emphasis is placed on quality of life, and the effects of issues such as hunger, health, conflict, gender dynamics, environment and climate change.

At Canadian Foodgrains Bank, we believe that youth have the power to change the world – and that change begins with education. The more our youth are informed, the better equipped they will be to be effective agents of positive change in their local communities and globally.

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**Learning objective:** to have students learn about issues of agriculture and hunger around world.

**Recommended grade level:** grade 7 and up

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

**Skills:** analysis, reading comprehension, interpretation of information, vocabulary, geography

**Recommended time:** about 45-75 minutes, plus time for additional homework assignment.

**Number of participants:** 2-25 (approximate)

**Materials:** Character and scenario cards– printable copies below, envelopes (optional), large world map (optional), vocabulary sheets (included below. Print one for each person or each group).

## Prep:

If time permits ahead of the activity, use a mind map or other activity (brainstorm, Think-Pair-Share, K-W-L, etc.) in order to activate students' prior knowledge of the main themes in the lesson: "agriculture" and "quality of life".

## Activity:

1. Print off scenario cards (below), and place in envelopes labelled for each of the eight characters.
2. Hand out the vocabulary sheet (below) to each student or each group. Bolded words are listed in the vocabulary sheet.
3. Hand out the student worksheet (below) to be filled out as the activity progresses or hand the worksheet out at the end of the activity.
4. Divide the class into **8** groups and give each group an envelope with one of the following character names and cards. Assign one student in each group to be the character representative. Have each character representative briefly explain their character to the whole class and locate their country on a map.
  - **Abasi** – Tanzania
  - **Monjila** – Bangladesh
  - **Radhika** – India
  - **Raj** – India
  - **Samira** – Burkina Faso
  - **Jean-Jacques** – Haiti
  - **Itzel** – Nicaragua
  - **Nakili** – Nicaragua

If you have a smaller class, omit characters from the activity.

5. Move through the five scenarios (**Land, Natural Disasters, Conflict, Health, and Food Prices**) one at a

time. Instruct the group to read the scenario card quietly as a group, and reflect on the issues outlined (*2-3 minutes per scenario*).

6. Once all groups have read and reflected briefly on their scenario, ask the corresponding questions (below). Allow for some discussion time within the group when needed. Once the full class discussion of the scenario is finished, have the students read the next scenario in their small group. Repeat with subsequent scenarios.
7. At the end of the five scenarios, ask the final discussion questions. Allow students time to offer further reflections.
8. Assign the optional homework assignment (below).
9. Assign the optional secondary activity – have each group present their homework assignment for further engagement and learning by the class.

Note: This activity can be easily broken up over two days if necessary, or if further discussion is desired.

*For more information, or if your class would like to participate in fundraising efforts to improve food security for people like these around the world, please contact [youth@foodgrainsbank.ca](mailto:youth@foodgrainsbank.ca) or call 1-800-665-0377.*

## Suggested Scenario Questions and Answer Key

The following are suggested questions and answers for each of the scenarios.

### Land:

1. *[Ask for a show of hands]* Which of your characters owns his or her own land? (**Abasi, Raj, Samira, Jean-Jacques**) How many rent? (**Itzel**) What are some of the other situations, with regards to landownership? (**Monjila is a farm labourer, Radhika's family lives and farms on land that they do not rent or own, Nakili's family is Indigenous and lives collectively on the land**)
2. Are there any other situations with regards to land that impact your character? (**infertile soil, desertification, deforestation, absentee landlord**)
3. Do you think that owning land affects one's ability to grow food?
4. What kinds of issues do you think Canadian farmers face with regards to land?

### Natural Disasters:

1. *[Ask for a show of hands]* Which of your characters experienced drought? (**Abasi, Raj, Samira, Itzel**) Which experienced too much water (i.e. flood or storm)? (**Abasi, Monjila, Jean-Jacques, Nakili**) Are there other factors or situations, with regards to natural disasters or weather, which affect your character?
2. Do you think that climate change has an impact on your character and his/her family? On the production of food? (**Many do not know when to plant because of the uncertain weather patterns, flooding of sea water onto crops, drought**)
3. Do you think that Canadian farmers are affected by natural disasters? How could climate change impact agriculture in Canada?

### Conflict:

1. *[Ask for a show of hands]* Which of your characters' communities are not in conflict and not affected by a conflict in a neighbouring region? (**Abasi, Jean-Jacques, Itzel**) Which anticipate that there may be conflict? (**Nakili, Radhika**) Which are affected by conflict in another region (i.e. refugees or people escaping violence)? (**Monjila, Samira**) Which of your characters' communities are presently in conflict? (**Raj**)
2. How is conflict impacting your character? If you are not currently affected by conflict, what could happen to your character and his or her family if there were conflict in the region?
3. Do you think that food production is affected by conflict? What about access to food?
4. What do you think would be the impact on Canadian farmers and consumers if war broke out in Canada?

### Health:

1. *[Ask for a show of hands]* Which communities have contracted a disease such as, cholera or malaria? (**Jean-Jacques, Nakili, Radhika**) What caused the spread of these diseases? (**storms and flooding**)
2. What are some of the health issues that your characters or community members are facing? (**pregnancy and malnutrition - Itzel, undernourished - Radhika, HIV/AIDS - Abasi's community**)
3. *[Ask for a show of hands]* Which character is pregnant? (**Itzel**) Why is it important for pregnant women to be well nourished? Which characters have children, grandchildren, or younger siblings? (**All**) Why is it important for young children to be well nourished?

4. How do you think illness affects the production of food? (**People are not able to tend to their fields**)
5. Do you think that Canadian farmers are affected by health issues?

#### Food Price:

1. *[Ask for a show of hands]* Which of your characters or their families are negatively impacted by higher food prices? (**Abasi, Monjila, Radhika, Raj, Samira (her son)**) Which are benefiting? (**Itzel**) Which are not affected? (**Samira because she had food assistance, Nakili because he lives in an isolated area.**)
2. Are there other factors or situations, with regard to food prices, that impact your character? (**Jean-Jacques has trouble selling his rice because rice from other countries is cheaper, Radhika's father is getting more for his rice but does not bring the money home to his family.**)
3. What kind of farmers generally benefit from rising food prices? (**Those who produce and sell food.**) What kind do not? (**Those who need to purchase food for themselves and their livestock (animals).**)
4. What do you think is the impact of rising food prices on Canadian farmers? (**Livestock producers would need to pay more for feed which would drive up the cost of animal products, other producers might get more money for their crops**) and consumers (**people would need to pay more for food**). What if food prices were to drop? (**Farmers may not receive a good price for their crops/livestock.**)

#### Final questions (optional):

1. *What is important for a good quality of life for your character? How is that the same as what is important for your quality of life? How is it different?*
2. *In this activity, were there any issues that were unique to the women? (**Pregnancy, landownership, abuse Note: men can also suffer abuse, but there were no examples in this activity**) To men? (**Migrating for work. Note: women also migrate for work. However, it is more common for women to stay home to care for the family while men go off to work elsewhere. Fighting in conflicts.**) To Indigenous people? (**landownership**)*
3. *What is the most interesting thing you learned from your character's life?*

## Vocabulary Sheet

**Advocate** – To speak in support of a cause.

**Bacterium** – Singular of bacteria.

**Cholera** – An acute intestinal infection caused by bacteria. It is most often spread by drinking water or eating food that has been contaminated.

**Climate** – Weather patterns that affect land areas.

**Compost** – A process that breaks down organic materials into humus (the dark organic material in soils, produced by the decomposition of vegetable or animal matter and essential to the fertility of the earth).

**Conserve** – To keep.

**Crop** – A field of plants that is grown to be harvested as food, feed for livestock, fuel or for any other economic purpose. For instance, a farmer may plant a crop of corn, potatoes or wheat to sell at the market or for personal consumption.

**Cyclone** – A very powerful storm with high winds. Causes much destruction.

**Deforestation** – Cutting of tree and forests; smaller plants are no longer protected from the sun, causing some regions to experience drought-like conditions.

**Desertification** – The process which turns land that could once be used to grow food into desert land. This mainly occurs in dry areas near deserts.

**Discrimination** – Unfair treatment of a person or group on the basis of prejudice.

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

**Durum wheat** – A type of wheat that is high in protein.

**Erode** – gradually wear away or destroy. **Erosion** is the action of water flow, wind, etc. which removes soil and rock from one location and deposits it elsewhere.

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

**Food assistance** – Helping people who otherwise would have no food by giving them food, or cash or vouchers to buy food, or seeds and tools to grow food.

**Food insecure** – When people do not always have enough nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life.

**Gross domestic product (GDP)** – A country's total market value of all goods and services that it produces in one year.

**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.

**Hides** – The skins of animals.

**HIV/AIDS** – A disease that affects people's immune systems and makes a person more likely to get infections.

**Indigenous** – The first and original people to settle on a land.

**Infertile** – (soil) When soil does not have the right conditions to grow food or other plants.

**Infrastructure** – The facilities serving an area, such as transportation, electricity and schools.

**International Development Agency** – An organization that works with people who live in poverty around the world, to better their standard of living.

**Labourer** – Someone who works for someone else, often doing physically demanding jobs such as picking fruit or digging ditches.

**Latrines** – An outdoor toilet where human waste is collected, like an outhouse.

**Lean months** – A period of time when there is a shortage of food between the end of one harvest and the beginning of the next.

**Livestock** – Farm animals (such as cows, horses, and pigs) that are kept, raised, and used by people.

**Low-lying country** – A country that is close to sea level. Low-lying regions are most likely to flood.

**Malaria** - A serious disease that causes chills and fever and that is passed from one person to another by mosquito bites. Is most common in countries around the equator.

**Malnourished** – Not having the right balance of nutrients either because one is not eating enough, one is not eating nutritious food, or because the body cannot absorb the nutrients consumed due to illness.

**Maize** – Another name for corn.

**Migrate** – To move or locate within a country.

**Millet** – a small-seeded grass grown around the world as a cereal crop.

**Monsoon** – Summer winds coming from the Indian Ocean that bring heavy rains to countries such as India and Bangladesh.

**Mulch** – Organic materials (like grass clippings, straw, etc.) which can be used to cover soil to lock in moisture.

**Non-governmental organization (NGOs)** – An organization that is not part of any government or state; they are often not-for-profit and volunteer bodies.

**Organic material** – Plant matter including peelings, cores, skins, leaves, and so on.

**Precarious** – Uncertain, unpredictable.

**Protest** – To speak out against something.

**Refugee** – A person who is outside their home country because they are fleeing danger of persecution or war.

**Rickshaw** – A small cart or bicycle used to carry one or two passengers, like a human-powered taxi.

**Rural** – Areas of low population density where people live, mainly on farms or in the countryside.

**Sahel** – The vegetation zone in Africa between the Sahara Desert and the tropical rainforests where grasses, shrubs and scattered trees grow. The Sahel is a very dry region.

**Sorghum** – A type of seeded grass grown as a cereal crop.

**Staple diet / foods** – The main foods that someone eats most regularly.

**Subsidies** - Money that is paid (usually by a government) to keep the price of a product low.

**Subsistence farmer** – A farmer who grows just enough food to maintain the survival of a family, with little or no surplus to sell.

**Topsoil** - The upper, outmost layer of soil which has the highest concentration of organic matter. The health of the topsoil is very important to growing plants.

**Undernourished** – When someone does not get enough food (calories) to meet the body's minimum daily needs.

**United Nations** – The United Nations (UN) is an organization made up of all the countries in the world. It promotes international co-operation.

**Urbanization** – The trend of more and more people worldwide living in cities.

**Water run-off** - The flow of water that occurs when excess water from rain, meltwater, or other sources flows over the Earth's surface.

**Widow** - A woman whose husband has died. A man whose wife has died is called a **widower**.

# Challenging Conditions

## Student Worksheet

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Character's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Character's country/region: \_\_\_\_\_

**Which scenario was the most interesting to you? Why?**

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**What do you think was the best thing and worst thing that impacted your character's quality of life?**

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**Of the five scenarios (land, natural disasters, conflict, health, food prices), which do you think has the biggest impact on Canadian farmers and consumers? Why?**

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**Imagine if one of the scenarios that happened to your character happened in Canada. How would your life be affected? \_\_\_\_\_**

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## Homework Assignment

### Country Facts Report

#### Part 1. Poster

Have the students create a poster about their character's country (done individually or in groups).

The students should research and include the following on their poster:

- Title
- An outline map of the continent their character's country is located in which clearly shows:
  - a. The country
  - b. Capital city of the country
  - c. Neighbouring countries
- A chart showing the following information for the country as compared to the same information for Canada:
  - a. Population
  - b. Average age
  - c. Geographical features (i.e. mountains, rivers, deserts)
  - d. Life expectancy
  - e. Main exports
  - f. Official languages
  - g. Human Development Index (HDI) rating
  - h. Percentage of **gross domestic product** related to agriculture
  - i. Percentage of workforce employed in agriculture

#### Part 2. Presentation

For the presentations, the students should be prepared to:

- Share the poster with the class.
- Identify on a map or a globe the country that they had in the simulation activity.
- Share and discuss what they thought was the most striking difference between their character's country and Canada.
- Share any other interesting facts or insights that they had during the classroom activity or as a result of their research.

## Homework Assignment

### Written Reflection

Have the students write a 1-2-page reflection on what they learned in the *Challenging Conditions* activity.

They may use the following questions as a guideline:

- What do you think is important for a good quality of life for your character? How is this similar as what is important for your quality of life? How is it different?
- What is the most interesting thing you learned about your character's life?
- How has this activity changed the way you imagine people around the world who don't have enough to eat or who are malnourished?
- How do you imagine life differs between a subsistence farmer in your character's country and for a typical farmer in Canada? How might their lives be similar?

## Country Facts Report Homework Rubric

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
<b>Required Elements</b>	The poster includes all required elements as well as additional information.	All required elements are included on the poster.	All but 1 of the required elements are included on the poster.	Several required elements were missing.
<b>Title</b>	Title can be read from 2 metres away and is quite creative.	Title can be read from 2 metres away and describes content well.	Title can be read from 1.5 metres away and describes the content well.	The title is too small and/or does not describe the content of the poster well.
<b>Content - Accuracy</b>	At least 7 accurate facts are displayed on the poster.	5-6 accurate facts are displayed on the poster.	3-4 accurate facts are displayed on the poster.	Less than 3 accurate facts are displayed on the poster.
<b>Graphics - Clarity</b>	Graphics are all in focus and the content easily viewed and identified from 2 metres away.	Most graphics are in focus and the content easily viewed and identified from 2 metres away.	Most graphics are in focus and the content is easily viewed and identified from 1.5 metres away.	Many graphics are not clear or are too small.
<b>Attractiveness</b>	The poster is exceptionally attractive in terms of design, layout, and neatness.	The poster is attractive in terms of design, layout and neatness.	The poster is acceptably attractive though it may be a bit messy.	The poster is distractingly messy or very poorly designed. It is not attractive.
<b>Mechanics</b>	Capitalization and punctuation are correct throughout the poster.	There is 1 error in capitalization or punctuation.	There are 2 errors in capitalization or punctuation.	There are more than 2 errors in capitalization or punctuation.
<b>Use of Class Time</b>	Used time well during each class period. Focused on getting the project done. Never distracted others.	Used time well during each class period. Usually focused on getting the project done and never distracted others.	Used some of the time well during each class period. There was some focus on getting the project done but occasionally distracted others.	Did not use class time to focus on the project OR often distracted others.
<b>Labels</b>	All items of importance on the poster are clearly labeled with labels that can be read from at least 1 metre away.	Almost all items of importance on the poster are clearly labeled with labels that can be read from at least 1 metre away.	Several items of importance on the poster are clearly labeled with labels that can be read from at least 1 metre away.	Labels are too small to view OR no important items were labeled.
<b>Presentation</b>	Poster was presented with confidence and poise. Voices were clearly audible. Excellent eye contact.	Poster presented well. Could hear most of the presentation. Good eye contact.	Poster was presented acceptably. Could hear some of the presentation. Some good eye contact.	Poster was presented poorly. Some parts couldn't be heard. Poor eye contact.

Comments:

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Total (Research and Communication) /36

## Writing Assignment Homework Rubric

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
<b>Reflection</b>	Reflection was thoughtful and showed excellent insight.	Reflection was mostly thoughtful and showed good insight.	Reflection was somewhat thoughtful and showed some insight.	Reflection was poorly done. Little or no insight shown. Missing required elements.

Comments:

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Total (Critical Thinking and Citizenship)     /4

## **Character Sheets**

Print off the following character scenario cards, cut along dotted line, and place in envelopes labelled for each of the eight characters (if available).



## IDENTITY

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# Abasi

**Name:** Abasi (Ah-BA-see)

**Country:** Tanzania

**Gender:** Male

**Age:** 38

**Family:** Wife (Rose), 7 children

My name is Abasi. Rose and I are **subsistence farmers** in Tanzania. We have seven children. We grow mostly **maize** – a type of corn that is common in Tanzania. Our **staple diet** consists of ugali, which is a cornmeal porridge eaten at most meals.



## SCENARIO 1 // LAND

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### Abasi - Tanzania

A few years ago, many farmers in the community next to ours sold their land to a foreign company. The money that they received was much less than the value of the land but, like us, the people had so little that they felt they had no choice but to take what was offered to them. Since then, most of these farmers have followed the trend of **urbanization** and have moved to the city, looking for work because they have no more land on which to grow food to eat.

For now, I've managed to avoid selling my land. We've started a small business of buying and selling animal **hides** to contribute to the family income. Rose and I taught the children how to salt the hides to preserve them and sell them in the local market. My wife uses the money from the sale of the hides to buy extra food or things for the family.



## Abasi - Tanzania

When I was a boy we always knew when the river would be high, and when it would be dry to the bottom. Because the rains used to arrive and end at the same time every year we knew when to plant our **crops**.

Now the rains are often late, or do not provide enough water when they finally arrive.

Inconsistent rain means it is more difficult for us to grow food. We farmers just don't know anymore when we should plant our fields or **harvest** them. The changing **climate** is making life very difficult.

Because there has been less rain for a few years, my family did not have enough food to eat.

Now we do everything we can to save water for use in the home and on the farm. I'm trying a method of farming that helps keep the earth full of moisture so the plants will grow. I actually stopped ploughing my fields, because I was losing important **topsoil**. I also cover my crops with organic matter - mainly leaves - to keep the sun from drying out the soil. With this new method my crops are improving, and my family gets enough to eat.



## Abasi - Tanzania

We are very lucky. I live in a quiet and peaceful village. There is no conflict currently in the region around our home.



## Abasi - Tanzania

In Tanzania, about five percent (5%) of adults have **HIV/AIDS**, a disease that affects people's immune systems, which makes it so they get other illnesses more easily. Many of those with HIV/AIDS have children and responsibilities to provide for their families, by either working in the fields or at a paid job. There are medications to help treat people with HIV/AIDS, but sometimes it is difficult for people to get it because they live far from a health centre or the medications are too expensive. Many people become very sick and cannot take care of their families. In some cases, people die as a result of HIV/AIDS.

Rose and I have seven children. Two of them are my nephews. They live with us because my brother and sister-in-law both died as a result of HIV/AIDS. I try to help my neighbours who are sick with HIV/AIDS, as it can be difficult for these people to work on their farms and get their **crops** planted or **harvested**. The disease makes people so tired, and farming is such hard work.



## Abasi - Tanzania

I usually produce just enough food to feed my family. Feeding nine people isn't easy. Sometimes when I don't grow enough I need to use some of the little money that we earn from my small business to buy food in the market.

Lately, we've needed to purchase food because our family ran out of the food and the **crops** in the field are not yet ready to be harvested. A few months ago, the price of food in the market suddenly went up very high. As a result of these high prices, I received less food for my money than I would have last year.



IDENTITY

# Monjila

**Name:** Monjila (Mon-GEE-la)

**Country:** Bangladesh

**Gender:** Female

**Age:** 21

**Family:** Husband (Nazmul), three-year old son

I'm Monjila. I'm 21 and I'm a **labourer**. My family and I do not own our own land to farm, though we have a small garden by our home to grow vegetables. Our **staple diet** consists of bhat (boiled rice), vegetables and fish. Because we do not have land on which to grow a **crop**, we buy much of our food in the market.



SCENARIO 1 // LAND

## Monjila - Bangladesh

I work on a small rice farm near my home with a group of women. We get paid to farm, but we do not own the land. I work long hours and my wages are very low – sometimes too low to buy enough food for my family. My husband Nazmul works as a **rickshaw** puller, and he has to **migrate** during the **monsoon** season to find work to help pay for our family's necessities.

The man who owns the farm where I work can be very abusive toward us women labourers. A number of times he has cursed at me, insulted me, and grabbed, shoved, and hit me.

The other women and I have created a women's self-help group. This group allows us to talk with each other on how to **advocate** for improvements to our working conditions, get higher wages, and stop the violence toward us. We also save money together and give each other loans. This money helps buy food, clothing and school fees for our children, and supports other ways to earn more money, such as making baskets to sell.

The women's group hopes to save enough money to buy our own small farm, but here in Bangladesh there are still many social and cultural barriers to women owning land. We're starting to talk about influencing local government to fight **discrimination** and make it easier for women like us to be able to own land. It's going to be a slow process.



## Monjila - Bangladesh

Our country, Bangladesh, is a **low-lying country**. As such, Bangladesh is known as the “frontline” of **climate** change, because it is so vulnerable to storms and rising sea levels.

My father says that storms are happening more often than they did when he was a child, and the storms are far worse.

Last year, a very large **cyclone** hit Bangladesh. It destroyed many things, including our house, and the rice **crop** on the farm where I work. The storms also brought salty sea water onto the farm fields. This is a big problem, because rice does not grow in salty soil.

Since the storm, our whole community is working at digging trenches in the salty fields to help the rainwater cleanse the soil. It is hard work. We also have to re-plant the fields. It will take a few seasons for the fields to be healthy again.



## Monjila - Bangladesh

Currently, there is no conflict in our community. However, there is conflict in Myanmar, a neighbouring country where people are being attacked. Many people from that country are coming to Bangladesh. This is impacting both me and Nazmul, as we both work as labourers and now must compete with the people from Myanmar for farm **labouring** jobs.



## Monjila - Bangladesh

We were still recovering from last year's **cyclone** when my husband Nazmul became very sick. He had contracted **cholera**. Cholera is a very dangerous **bacterium** that lives and travels in water. People get sick from cholera by drinking contaminated water, or eating food that has been washed in contaminated water. Cholera is so dangerous that many people who get it will die, especially if they are not able to get immediate medical attention.

Because of the storm, many people in our community became sick. The people who had cholera were too sick to work, and family members had to decide between working and caring for the sick. This means that there were fewer people working in the fields and repairing homes. My mother-in-law came to care for Nazmul while he was sick, while I worked in the field and cared for our young son. My husband eventually regained his health, but many others died.

Now I'm trying everything I can to make sure my family does not get sick. I am filtering all the water we use by straining it through many layers of cloth. I'm worried that I will get sick and not be able to take care of the family, especially when Nazmul is away working.



## Monjila - Bangladesh

Because I don't own any land, I must buy most of our food at the market. A few years ago, the price of food went up very high and many people in the capital **protested** the high prices. I couldn't afford to buy enough rice for my family. As a result, we had to eat less and my family had less energy. However, this year the price of rice has decreased, so I'm again able to buy enough rice.



IDENTITY

# Radhika

**Name:** Radhika (RA-dee-kah)

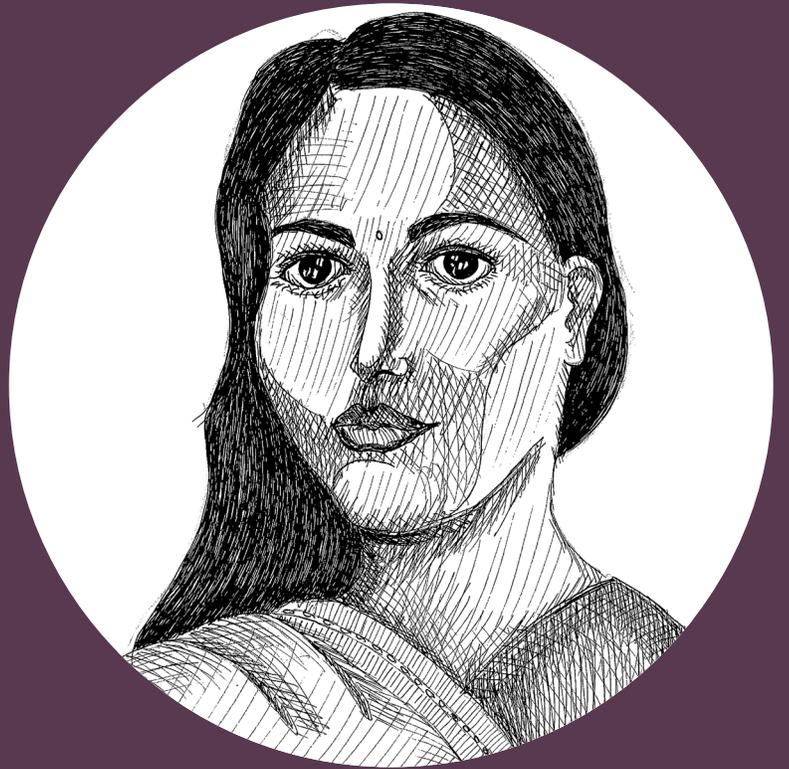
**Country:** India

**Gender:** Female

**Age:** 16

**Family:** Parents, two younger brothers, one younger sister

My name is Radhika, and I'm 16 years old. I have two younger brothers and one younger sister. My parents are **subsistence farmers**. We live on the land we farm, but do not own it. Mostly we eat rice, **millet** and various vegetables.



SCENARIO 1 // LAND

## Radhika - India

My family has lived on our farm since my grandfather was a young boy. Along with a small community of about ten families, we live on and farm a small plot of land owned by a man that we have never met and who lives in a different country. My parents feel that they should own the land because they are tending to it, while the landowner is not. We grow enough food to feed ourselves, with a little left over to sell. We grow mostly rice in the field, as well as some vegetables in a small garden around the house.

Our little community has just heard that the landowner is thinking of selling the land to a large company that will make us leave, even though we have been living here for two generations.

None of us has enough money to purchase the land ourselves. Some community members are trying to organize and challenge the landowner through the courts. Others have accepted that they will have to move.

I don't want us to lose our home.



## Radhika - India

Thankfully, my community did not experience a natural disaster this year. Other parts of India have been experiencing terrible floods and **droughts**, and I'm glad that my family is safe from those for now.

However, the weather patterns have been changing in our region. It used to be very clear when the seasons began and ended, and therefore when to plant and **harvest** our **crops**. Usually, the **monsoon** season occurs in May, and provides much-needed water to rain-fed crops. However, recently the monsoon season has been either starting much sooner than expected or much later.

This change in the **climate** is making farming more difficult for my family and the whole community, and many others throughout India too, from what I hear. We don't know when to plant or harvest our crops.



## Radhika - India

There is currently no conflict in our area. However, if the community members refuse to leave, and the new landowner decides to use force to remove them, there could be conflict and violence here.



## Radhika - India

My family has a very small farm. We grow rice and a few vegetables. Sometimes it is enough food to feed everyone, and sometimes there is enough to sell in the marketplace. However, there are times when we all have very little to eat. During these times, I don't get enough food. I become sick because I'm **undernourished**. This makes it difficult for me to help my parents tend to their fields.

Luckily, my younger brothers and sister benefit from a national school lunch program. Since they still go to school they get a good hot meal at lunchtime, as is the law for all schools in India to serve a hot lunch to students. I am thankful that my siblings get enough food every day. But I often wish I still attended school so that I could have lunch daily - and learn!



## Radhika - India

My mother and I grow vegetables in our garden to eat and to sell in the market. My father is in charge of selling the family's rice, which we grow in our other fields. The money my mother makes selling vegetables always goes directly to the needs of the family, but the money my father makes doesn't always come home. Sometimes he spends it on other things without asking the family, and often these things don't benefit everyone. Usually, this makes it more difficult to pay for things that we need.

Recently, it has become worse. The price of food has increased a lot over the last few years, which means that our family gets more money for the food we sell, but it also costs more to buy the food we don't grow but need in order to eat well. My father is getting a higher price for the rice, but he is not bringing that money home. I don't know what he spends it on, and my mother and I do not make enough from our vegetables to pay for what we need.



IDENTITY

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# Raj

**Name:** Raj

**Country:** India

**Gender:** Male

**Age:** 29

**Family:** Wife (Bishni), 2 children

My name is Raj, Bishni and I are **subsistence farmers** and have two children; we live on and tend land that we own. We live in a remote, dry area of Eastern India. Our **staple diet** is mainly vegetables, wheat, **millet** and lentils, along with a flatbread called roti.



SCENARIO 1 // LAND

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## Raj - India

The land that my family and I live on and farm has been in my family for several generations. It is a dry piece of land but we work hard on our small farm, growing mostly **durum wheat** and lentils, along with vegetables in the garden.

The region in which we live has a typically dry **climate**, but we do experience heavy rains during the **monsoon** season.



## Raj - India

Though the region has always been dry, the weather has been getting drier and drier every year. We all rely on the rains to water our fields, and the rains have not been coming at the right times. In the past, I always knew when the **monsoon** season was coming, but now it comes late, or it doesn't rain very much, causing **drought**.

This year, the monsoon season was very late and I was not able to grow very much food for the last **harvest** because it was too dry. Our family had to make do with less food. Since there is no other employment opportunity near our home, I made a difficult decision to **migrate** to the city of Delhi (*Dell-ee*) to find work.

Delhi is over 24 hours away by car - a long way even if you own a car. I've travelled there to find work in factories. I am sending the money I earn back to my family so they can buy food. I would much rather stay home with my family, but we need the money. I miss my wife and our two sons a lot.



## Raj - India

Recently I returned to my family for a visit, after three months away in Delhi (*Dell-ee*). Many people in our region have been travelling to find work to feed their families. Many families are stressed, and tensions are high.

Some fighting has broken out between various families around where we live. I am not sure why, but I think that it is because some families were preventing other families from using a water supply. Sometimes the fighting gets quite bad.

I'm afraid that the fighting will affect my family. My wife, Bishni, is afraid for when I must go back to Delhi. She often does not go out to farm, because she is afraid for her safety and the safety of our two sons.



## Raj - India

As you have learned, my family is **food insecure**. Luckily, both of our sons are now in school, where they receive a hot lunch every day at school. The money that I send home and the food that they get from their **harvest** also helps us feed the family, if only once a day.

Even though the family is food insecure, and there is not enough food right now, we have managed to stay relatively healthy. However, we know other families who have very sick and weak relatives because of a lack of food, and they know that their situation is **precarious**. I feel my family is in the same situation. If I lose my job, or if the rains are late or not enough, I don't know how we would get food.



## Raj - India

The price of food has been increasing all over the world. A few years ago, the price of food went up very high and many people all over India **protested** the high prices. The price has gone down since then, but it is still higher than it used to be, and is increasing. There are still protests in Delhi, where I've been working.

Because my family and I are already **food insecure**, even a small rise in the price of food can have a big impact. With me far away in Delhi, and the last **harvest** being poor, my family is trying to make the money last until the next harvest. Since the price of rice has increased again, it is becoming more difficult for everyone at home to get enough food, especially my wife Bishni. She often makes sure the children get food first, and sometimes eats very little herself.



IDENTITY

# Samira

**Name:** Samira (sa-MEE-rah)

**Country:** Burkina Faso

**Gender:** Female

**Age:** 60

**Family:** Six children, eight grandchildren, two great-grandchildren. Widowed.

My name is Samira. I'm a **subsistence farmer**. Because I am a **widow**, I own a very small plot of land that my husband once owned. The region in which we live is naturally a very dry region, known as the **Sahel**. It is just south of the Sahara Desert. There is often not very much rain, but people have lived and farmed in this region for thousands of years. My diet mainly consists of **maize** (a type of corn) and **sorghum** (another type of grain). I rarely eat meat, as it is too expensive. Occasionally I help care for my grandchildren and great-grandchildren.



SCENARIO 1 // LAND

## Samira - Burkina Faso

Around here, much land that used to be good for farming has turned into desert. Thousands of years of farming, animals grazing and people living on the land, combined with even lower rainfalls due to **climate** change, is causing the soil to **erode** and become desert. This is called **desertification**.

My farm is close to the desertified land, and I worry that soon my farm land will turn into desert as well. I watch the sand creeping ever closer, and I wonder what to do.



## Samira - Burkina Faso

Stretches of **drought** are happening more often where I live. I remember droughts when I was a child, but they were not frequent. Now, serious drought seems to come every few years. As a result, I can't produce enough food for the **lean months**.

Last year was a very bad year in my community. There was no rain at all and most **crops** were poor. I only **harvested** enough **sorghum** to feed my family for two months.

After eating all the food, I went begging for food from my neighbours. They didn't have any to give me.

Fortunately, people from other communities and countries knew that there was a major food shortage in my region. A **non-governmental organization (NGO)** came to our community to distribute food to those who were at risk of starving because of the drought. I received this **food assistance**, and I will continue to receive it for the next few months, until the crops that are currently in the fields can be harvested.



## Samira - Burkina Faso

In addition to the **drought** in the region around Burkina Faso, there has been conflict in a neighbouring country. **Refugees** from the conflict are coming into Burkina Faso.

The refugees who are fleeing the fighting are hungry, and because they've left their farms, they can't plant their **crops** for the next growing season.

There are refugee camps being set up by the **United Nations**. However, some of the refugees are also living in other areas around Burkina Faso. While I'm glad my country can host people in need, I am worried that soon there will not be enough food to share.



## Samira - Burkina Faso

Because I am now receiving **food assistance**, I am no longer sick and weak. Before the food arrived, I was eating leaves that filled my stomach but did not give my body enough nutrients. I was very weak, but I still worked hard to find food to help my family. Some of my grandchildren became very sick. Now that some of my children and I are receiving food assistance, the grandchildren have more energy, and so do I.

I've already planted a **crop** for the next **harvest**. If I continue to receive food assistance before the next harvest, I'll be healthy enough to tend my current crop.



## Samira - Burkina Faso

Another impact of **drought** in the region is that there is very little food in the market, and it is very expensive. The price of food has doubled from last year—which was already very high for me. Luckily, I am receiving **food assistance**, so I need to buy very little from the market. However, three of my children and their families didn't receive food assistance. I share what I can with my children but there isn't enough food to feed everyone. One of my sons had to sell his only goat to be able to buy **maize** and beans from the market. Unfortunately, he got very little for his goat because many other families were selling their goats at the same time.



IDENTITY

# Jean-Jacques

**Name:** Jean-Jacques (Zhah-Zhahk)

**Country:** Haiti

**Gender:** Male

**Age:** 54

**Family:** Wife (Elvina), 4 children, 3 grandchildren.

My name is Jean-Jacques. Elvina and I are **subsistence farmers**. We own our own farm land in a **rural** area of Haiti. Mostly we eat rice and beans. During good times, we eat meat once a week. Plantain (a type of banana), avocado, bananas, mango, and citrus fruits are also **staple foods** for us, but only when they are in season.



SCENARIO 1 // LAND

## Jean-Jacques - Haiti

The soil on our farm is becoming increasingly **infertile** – which means that the soil is no longer good and healthy for growing **crops**. This is happening for many reasons, including **deforestation**. Deforestation is a problem because it means that the roots of trees, which help keep the soil healthy and in place, are removed.

Deforestation has many causes. For example, farmers in some other countries receive **subsidies** to produce rice, which means that they can sell it in Haiti for a low price. This means that we Haitian rice farmers do not get a good price for the rice we grow, because we are trying to compete with the rice coming from elsewhere. When people don't get enough money for their rice, they cannot afford gas stoves to do their cooking, so they cut down trees for firewood to use for fires on which to cook. This is a major problem in the community where I live and is contributing to deforestation, and infertile soil.

Soil infertility is making it difficult for us to grow enough food for our family.



## Jean-Jacques - Haiti

Haiti is a beautiful island. But we often experience hurricanes. While storms have always occurred, they are getting worse, and are occurring more frequently due to the changing **climate**.

Storms have a big impact on Haiti. Because of **deforestation**, river banks are often unstable, and a storm can cause a river to **erode** land very quickly. Storms also carry away important **topsoil**, and cause flooding which destroys farms, homes and **infrastructure**.

The last storm to hit our region caused flooding and **erosion** around the nearby river, and destroyed **crops** on many farms. Our own farm was nearly completely destroyed. It was such a horrible shock.

A community group I am a part of has decided to plant new trees and grasses around the river to help keep the river banks sturdy and strong for the next time there is a flood. We're also planting trees and grasses on the nearby mountain slopes to reduce the amount of **water run-off** that contributes to flooding.

I hope these efforts will help reduce flooding, and help the soil become healthy again so that we can produce more food on our land.



## Jean-Jacques - Haiti

We are lucky as we live in a quiet and peaceful community. There is currently no conflict in our region.



## Jean-Jacques - Haiti

Storms and flooding can contribute to the spread of disease. **Cholera** is a very dangerous **bacterium** that lives and travels in water. Cholera is often spread because human waste has reached a clean water supply. People get sick from cholera by drinking contaminated water, or eating food that has come in contact with contaminated water. Cholera is so dangerous that some people who catch it will die, especially if they are not able to get immediate medical attention.

Last year, the flooding from the storms spread cholera to the community where we live. Many children became very sick, and one died. The parents of the sick kids took turns staying home to care for them. Some adults also came down with the illness. Since many people were either sick or were busy caring for their sick children, they were not able to tend to their fields. As a result, there was a very poor **harvest**.

This year, my neighbours and I decided to build good, clean **latrines** to make the community more resistant to cholera. With help from an **international development agency**, we have also developed ways to clean water, and are teaching everyone to wash their hands frequently.



## Jean-Jacques - Haiti

Planting the trees along the river has already helped my farm, as the trees have helped the river bank become more stable. I've also used natural materials, such as **compost**, as **fertilizer** for the fields. There have also been good rains. All of these have helped me produce more rice this year than last year. I'm trying to sell a little of our extra rice in the market, for some extra income.

Many people prefer the taste of local rice, like the kind we sell. However, as mentioned before, our Haitian rice is actually more expensive than rice that has been imported from other countries. This makes it difficult for me to find buyers for my **crop**.



## IDENTITY

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# Itzel

**Name:** Itzel (EET-sel)

**Country:** Nicaragua

**Gender:** Female

**Age:** 34

**Family:** Husband (Roberto), two children, currently pregnant

My name is Itzel. Roberto and I have two children, with another on the way. We're **subsistence farmers**. We live on land owned by someone else, and pay rent to use it. We live on the Pacific Ocean side of Nicaragua. Our region is close to the ocean, but is an area that is very dry and hot. Mostly we eat rice and beans, tortillas made of corn, and plantain (a type of banana). We usually manage to eat two meals a day.



## SCENARIO 1 // LAND

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### Itzel - Nicaragua

We grow as much food as we can, of course. But sometimes we don't **harvest** enough to keep everyone fed, let alone harvest enough extra to sell for cash to pay the rent for the land we farm.

Once a year, my husband Roberto leaves home to work in the nearby mountains where he picks coffee beans for a coffee farmer. He is usually gone for three months to provide more income for us, and to pay rent for the land. It's harder right now, because I'm pregnant. I have to take care of our two children and tend the land by myself while my husband is away. It is very hard work.

A few months ago, I heard of an organization that was helping families like ours purchase their own land through a loan. With this loan, we hope to buy a plot of land. It would make such a difference for us! My dream is that once we own our own land my husband will not have to leave each year for the coffee harvest.



## Itzel - Nicaragua

Our region of Nicaragua experiences two seasons: the dry season and the rainy season. Traditionally, the rains are very predictable - so much so that the rains are said to arrive each year on May 15.

However, for the past few years, the rains have become less predictable. The rains have been arriving later and later, meaning that we farmers don't know when best to plant our **crops**. It also means that there is less rain in the rainy season, a major problem in a region that is already dry. Now **drought** has become a big concern.

Last year, a number of us in my community began learning a new technique, from a local group, to help **conserve** moisture in the soil. We now use **mulch** to cover the fields and conserve soil moisture, even when there isn't rain. I've also stopped ploughing my fields because important **topsoil** was being lost.



## Itzel - Nicaragua

Right now there is no conflict in our region. I am so grateful for this because when I was a young girl there was a civil war in Nicaragua. Two of my uncles were killed and I had to help my aunts who were **widowed**. The economy was very bad and many men left their homes and farms to fight. It was such a sad and terrifying time. I hope to never see such conflict again. I'm thankful for every day of peace.



## Itzel - Nicaragua

I'm pregnant with our third child! We're all are excited about it.

I know good nutrition is extremely important for pregnant women. Extra calories and nutrients are required to ensure that the baby is getting enough food to grow and develop properly. I know that babies born of mothers who do not have enough food or nutrition are at higher risk for diseases and other problems.

Unfortunately, I think I'm already **malnourished**. I'm so tired. I try to eat as much healthy food as possible, but my two young children come first and sometimes there isn't enough to go around. Sometimes I only eat rice, without any source of protein. With Roberto away, I have to work extra hard on the farm, and the work is difficult. My children are too young to help very much on the farm, though they try hard. My parents and brothers have their own farms to take care of, though they help out when they can.



## Itzel - Nicaragua

Because of the recent **drought**, the price of rice, corn and beans have all gone up in the local market. This makes it difficult for people who need to buy food in the market. Some of our neighbours may need to sell off some of our **livestock** to afford the high priced food, or simply go with less.

However, since using the new farming technique, which is designed to help **conserve** moisture and produce more food, the **crops** have grown very well. Even with the drought, these ideas worked! I've been able to produce enough food for my family. I was even able to sell a little extra at the market for a higher price than I would normally receive. I'll use this money to buy some chickens which can provide eggs, an important source of protein for my family.



IDENTITY

# Nakili

**Name:** Nakili (Na-KEE-lee)

**Country:** Nicaragua

**Gender:** Male **Age:** 31

**Family:** Wife (Cendela), 2 children

My name is Nakili. My wife Cendela and I have two children. Like the rest of our community, we're **subsistence farmers** who have been living on land along the Coco River of Central America for generations. We are an **indigenous** people called the Miskito. We live in a very isolated part of Nicaragua near the Atlantic Coast. There are no roads and you can only reach the community by a small boat along a river. It is not easy to grow food in this area of the country. Often people here will experience **lean months**, meaning that there is a shortage of food between the end of one **harvest** and the beginning of the next. During good times, we eat two main meals a day. Usually we eat root vegetables, such as sweet manioc and yams, as well as plantains (a kind of banana that you cook), rice, beans, and fish from the river.



SCENARIO 1 // LAND

## Nakili - Nicaragua

The national government, which is located far away in another part of the country, has recently passed a new law about landownership in Nicaragua. My community is **indigenous**, meaning we were here long before the Spanish ever arrived in Central America. We share our land together as the whole community, and we've followed this tradition for generations. However, the national government doesn't recognize our right to own the land. The government is selling the land to non-indigenous people from other parts of the country. People in my community are concerned that we will lose control of our land, and that the rainforest in which we live will be cleared for **crops** or to raise **livestock**.



## Nakili - Nicaragua

The area in which my family and I live often gets hit by hurricanes. The last major one was a few years ago. We are still recovering from losing our **crops** and **livestock** that year. Because this loss was so devastating, and because there are no communities nearby with whom to trade, we received **food assistance** from an **international development agency** to help us get by until the next **harvest**.



## Nakili - Nicaragua

Because we are fearful of losing our land to non-**indigenous** people, some community members want to defend our lands at any cost, including the use of violence. Thankfully, no violence has occurred yet, but I know of other regions where there have been clashes due to land disputes. My family and I don't want to lose our community's land, but I also don't know if I should resort to violence.



## Nakili - Nicaragua

The Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua gets a lot of rain, which means that there are many mosquitoes! Some people even think we Miskito people are named after mosquitoes, but this isn't true.

Unfortunately, many mosquitoes carry **malaria**, a serious illness. A few years ago, my son became very sick with malaria. Luckily he survived. However, because there were few medical services in the area, he was weak and very sick for months; he was not able to help me tend to the fields or fish. This meant that I had to do all of the work myself. Thanks to some prevention programs run by a regional health centre, the number of cases of malaria has dropped in the region.



## Nakili - Nicaragua

Because we live in such an isolated region, we rely almost completely on the food that we produce in our fields and catch in the local river.

A small, local market located down the river from the community takes place twice a week. Here we can buy some **staple foods** or other necessities.

Because of our isolation, the people along the river do very little trade beyond our own communities. So we are not affected very much when the price of foods rises or falls in other parts of the country, as it has this year. However, if we cannot produce enough food it also means that it is very difficult to access food from elsewhere. If we don't produce food or don't catch enough fish, we either don't eat or have to rely on **food assistance**, as we did a few years ago. It's as simple as that.



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