

Hard Harvest

This assembly is intended to accompany the Diocese of Carlisle Harvest Appeal 2016. It focuses on the work of Christian Aid in Mali which, along with CMS work in Argentina, is the focus of the appeal.

THEMES: Harvest, climate change, gender

FOCUS COUNTRY: Mali

MATERIAL REQUIRED: The **HARD HARVEST** presentation available from <http://bit.ly/1U7cS2V>; a handful of cress seeds (select a variety like 'Curled Cress' that can be grown year-round indoors); soil, plant pots, labels.

Assembly presentation

Slide 1. Introduce the assembly by explaining that it is Harvest; a time in the year when we celebrate the food that we eat and give thanks for the way it has grown. Not only is it a time to celebrate that we have food – it is also a moment to think about where the food we eat comes from and the journey it has made to reach our plates.

With that in mind, ask the students to come up with a list of tools and conditions they think they would need if they were going to start growing their own food (you could use paper or a whiteboard to make a list of the answers given). If there are any keen gardeners in the group, maybe ask them to explain what they need to help crops to grow in their garden – from soil to sunlight, water to weeding.

Play 'grow or no': ask the children if they think crops could grow in the conditions shown in slides 2 – 7 on the *Hard Harvest PowerPoint presentation*. The group can vote 'grow' or 'no' with each image. Encourage them to use this activity to think about the conditions that might make growing crops easy or difficult.

Explain that, amazingly, in all of the places in the photographs, it is possible to grow food – but it takes some hard work and adaptation. Christian Aid and its partners are working hard to help people grow food in some of these challenging places (like those shown in slides 2, 4, 6, and 7). It is hard, but as we will learn

from the example of Mali, shown in slide 7, it is possible.

Mali is a country in West Africa. Some people in this country really struggle to grow enough food to eat. The main reason for this is that the weather makes it difficult to grow crops. As we've discussed, we need lots of things to be able to grow things easily, with sunlight, rain and rich soil being some of the most important things.

While Mali has a LOT of sunlight (the temperature can rise to over 40°C there, which is VERY hot!), it does not get much rain at all. And, over the last 20 years, it has become harder to predict when the rain might come. Mali has even had major droughts, when it didn't rain for so long that the soil completely dried up. Millions of people were left hungry in the droughts as the crops didn't grow properly – and because most people here grow their own food, this left them very hungry indeed.

Ask the pupils if they can think of any reasons why the weather might be changing so much in Mali? *Across the world, the climate is changing, and this is causing the weather to change in different places – some places are getting hotter and drier, and some are getting more rain than they used to. In places where it is already difficult to grow food, the changing weather is an extra challenge that can make life even more difficult. Amazingly though,*

even in this very dry landscape, with the right tools it is possible to grow things – it just takes extra hard work and a bit of luck.

Show slide 8. One thing that does grow really well, especially in an area of Mali called the Dogon valley, is shallots (a type of onion) – it is quite famous for them!

Show slide 9. This is Hama Kelepily with his grandmother Tomey. When Hama got really sick with malaria, an illness which is carried by mosquitoes, his grandmother was able to buy medicine for him which made him better. She was able to buy the medicine with money she had saved from selling the shallots and chillies she had grown.

Show slide 10. This is amazing in lots of ways. In the past, the women in this village did not own any land and so they were not able to grow their own food. Traditionally in Mali, women have not had very much say in their own lives or in the village they live in. So Christian Aid worked with a local organisation called Actions pour la Promotion Humaine

(APH) to set up a women's association in the village where Tomey lives and persuaded the men to give the women some good land to grow vegetables on. Tomey also received training on new ways to farm so that she could get the best out of the land. Now she can grow food and sell it! This meant that Tomey was able to save money and buy medicine that made Hama better when he was ill with malaria. It also means that more people are growing food so the village can keep going in the hungry season – and women feel a lot more included in the village.

In places where there are lots of challenges, like in Mali, it is important to have lots of solutions. Another way people in the Dogon valley help make themselves stronger in the face of challenges is by sharing. In the Dogon valley, villages are split into 'cikedas' – these are groups of families who join together. They work in the fields together in a team, growing their food, helping each other and sharing whatever grows. Because life is tough in this area of the world, it's important to help each other in order to survive.

Prayer

Thank you for this beautiful world you made. Thank you for sunshine and for rain and for how that helps the crops that feed us to grow. We pray for farmers across the world for the work they do and the challenges they face in growing us food to eat. We especially pray for those in Mali who face weather challenges that make it difficult to grow – and thank you that through sharing and working together we can make things better. Amen.

Action

- Use the cress seeds to encourage the class to think about whether resources are better shared, and ask them to explain why sharing might work better. Students could plant some seeds in pots in the assembly to visually demonstrate how this works.
- Take small actions that together with other people make the world a better place through one million ways. Find out more about the movement, including schools resources, at: www.christianaid.org.uk/onemillionways.
- Donate to the Bishop of Carlisle's Harvest Appeal 2016, raising money for Christian Aid and CMS. You could have a bake or garden sale to celebrate Harvest. You could even have a go at making the traditional Malian meal of 'Toh'. Toh forms the staple diet of the Dogon people and is often eaten with sauce made from baobab leaves at festival time. You can download the recipe and find a leaflet with more information on both projects featured in this appeal from the Harvest Appeal page of the diocesan website (<http://bit.ly/1U7cS2V>).

christianaid.org.uk/learn

This material has been written for educational purposes. For wider distribution or commercial gain, permission must be sought from Christian Aid. The Christian Aid name and logo are trademarks of Christian Aid. Christian Aid is a key member of ACT Alliance. © Christian Aid July 2015
UK registered charity number 1105851 Company number 5171525 Scotland charity number SC039150 Northern Ireland charity number XR94639
Company number NI059154 Republic of Ireland charity number CHY 6998 Company number 426928