



Aims

- To explore some of the issues faced by subsistence farmers in Malawi
- To create an 'issues tree' (Toolbox CD ROM) around subsistence farming in Malawi

What you need

- Copies of pupil information sheet *Subsistence farming in Malawi*
- Teacher information sheet *Subsistence farming in Malawi* (CD ROM)

What to do

In pairs, pupils read the pupil information sheet on subsistence farming. Ask the pupils to highlight or underline the problems that the farmers in the countryside in Malawi have. Explain that you are going to create an 'issues tree' to explore some of these problems. See diagram opposite. Draw a large tree on the board or chart paper. In the trunk write 'subsistence farming in Malawi'. Elicit from the pupils the problems they have found for subsistence farmers. Write these effects on the branches.

Now fill in the roots with the reasons for subsistence farming. Finally encourage the pupils to find solutions to some of the problems (the branches) and write them in the leaves.

Teacher prompts

Does the work on the land take a long time? Why? What could improve this?
 Does the land always get enough water? How could this be improved?
 Do the farmers have cash to buy food? Why? How could they earn money?
 Who owns the land?
 Is there enough land to feed a family? What happens when the family gets bigger? Why do children sometimes not go to school?

Reflection and Evaluation

The majority of the population in Malawi are subsistence farmers and they face many problems. Climate change is having a big impact on farming in Malawi. Climate change is looked at in more detail in the Water topic. Often fertile land is taken for cash crops such as tobacco and sugar rather than for food.

Pupil information sheet

Most people in Malawi live in the countryside (rural areas). Most people living in the countryside are farmers and grow food for themselves and their families to live on. They are called subsistence farmers. The farmers grow maize which they will store and keep to eat. They also have small vegetable gardens where they will grow things such as potatoes, tomatoes, pumpkins and greens. Sometimes, if they have any spare maize or vegetables they can sell them at the market to make some money.

Most of the work on the land is done by hand. The women in village usually look after the vegetable gardens while the men look after the maize crops. This is very time consuming and sometimes the children have to stay home from school to help with the farm.

People are given their land by the village leaders. This means they do not own the land and might not want to spend money improving it. As a family grows in size the land is split into smaller areas so everyone can grow their food. This can make it difficult to produce enough food.

In Malawi it rains during November to April. This is when the maize is grown. It is planted when the rains start and harvested in March and April.

The crops need rain in order to grow. If the crops don't grow then the farmer and his family will not have enough food to eat and they will be hungry. Sometimes the rain does not come and there is a drought. Sometimes there is too much rain and there is a flood. Drought and flood can stop the food from growing.

The farmers in Malawi have found that the rain is often not coming when they think it will so it makes it hard for them to plant and grow their crops. This is because of climate change.



Activity 8: Subsistence farming in Malawi

