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Key skills communication Level 3 - Africa

Tuesday 24 June 2003

Source Booklet

- This booklet contains source material for the level 3 communication test, June 2003
- The test questions will be based on this material
- You must hand in this source booklet at the end of the test, along with your question paper and answer booklet

The level 3 communication test will assess your ability to:

- select and read material that contains the required information
- identify accurately, and compare, the lines of reasoning and main points from the text and images
- synthesise the key information in a form that is relevant to the purpose
- select and use a form and style of writing that is appropriate to the purpose and subject matter
- organise relevant information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary when appropriate
- ensure text is legible and spelling, grammar and punctuation are accurate so that meaning is clear

Feed the World – Make Trade Fair

In the last month, hours of broadcasting and acres of newsprint have been devoted to unpicking the hourly fluctuations on the Dow Jones and the Financial Times Stock Exchange (FTSE). Meanwhile, the price of coffee on world markets has almost halved. Many other commodity prices have collapsed too, with a consequent fall in income for their producers. Fifteen million of the world's poorest people are directly affected, contributing to a potentially catastrophic humanitarian disaster.

More than 12 million are currently at risk of starvation in Africa, as a major relief appeal seeks to save some of these lives. But putting £10 in a collection tin will not be enough if we do not understand the deeper causes and the crucial role we play in perpetuating them.

Famines are not natural disasters or acts of God, but the product of human acts and omissions. Even two years of drought should not leave millions starving. That six million of those at risk are in Zimbabwe is testimony to the human cost of a political tyranny.

That dictatorship and war are major causes of famine is a case that can be made powerfully by Africa's democrats. But Western governments have at least an equal share of responsibility – indeed our hypocrisy on free trade contributes massively to Africa's endemic poverty and political instability.

Africa needs a fair chance to sell its produce. Yet President Bush has just pledged an additional \$180 billion to support America's farmers over the next decade. The European Union, shamefully, wastes half of its budget on inefficient agricultural subsidies.

We all lose out, in higher prices and higher taxes. But the cost in Africa can be measured in lives.

European leaders are backing 'urgent' emergency relief to Africa. But they should also do much more to ensure that the latest efforts to reform the Common Agricultural Policy deliver more than months of interminable haggling and another fudge. Europeans need to realise that every £1 million given to charity does little to counter the £70bn every year in subsidies, the rigged rules and the double standards by which we lock the world's poorest people out of the global economy.

Southern Africa may need our charity now but an equally important demand is that of simple justice on trade.

Source: *The Observer*, 28 July 2002

20M FACE STARVATION

Luke Pirl stands alone in “the warm heart of Africa” – the tourist brochure description of Malawi, the sixth poorest country on earth.

The emaciated body of the three-year-old is covered in scabies. His belly is distended. His ribs racked. His suffering a symbol of famine stalking his tiny, landlocked nation.

For months charities have sounded the alarm on an impending tragedy in Malawi and its neighbours Zambia and Zimbabwe.

As many as 20 million are suffering hunger and malnutrition. It is the worst food shortage in nearly 60 years. Unless direct action is taken quickly, officials warn, the region will see a disaster greater than that of Ethiopia 20 years ago.

In Malawi alone, at least 2 million of its 11 million population will die. But, as ever, help comes too little, too late.

Of the £46 million relief workers say is needed, donors have pledged only around £1.5million.

“Famine – what famine?” It is a question to which donor nations international aid chiefs and Malawi’s own government have stubbornly clung as people lie dying.

Excessive rains and prolonged drought depleted the maize harvest. But that is only part of the picture.

Three years ago, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) ordered Malawi to sell off its grain stocks. It held nearly 170,000 tonnes in huge silos and warehouses.

By “liberalising” grain policy the IMF argued, farmers would be encouraged to grow more. The agriculturally-based economy would be opened up. It was a policy designed for disaster. A field day for a corrupt government. It sold off its grain stocks, but to unregulated private traders, many with close links to the ruling party. No one is sure where the money went.

Then the famine arrived and the government asked donor countries for help. They refused. So did the IMF, which helped cause the crisis.

The government was forced to take a £24 million foreign bank loan to import 135,000 tonnes of maize, of which less than half has arrived. The price of maize has rocketed by 500 per cent. For the vast majority earning less than 75p a day, it is a death warrant.

The IMF has refused debt relief, saying any money for food must come from further budget cuts. And the European Union (EU) has refused to offer more than a £32million relief package, arguing – despite the evidence – that there is enough food to feed the people... for the moment.

Both the president and the IMF said they were “too busy” to speak

with us this week. But others were only too willing. An old woman holds out her hand. It contains nothing but parched grass.

“This”, she tells me, “is what we have been eating. This and banana roots, pumpkin leaves and worms.”

Farmers could not afford fertiliser. The wrong weather spelled a 35 per cent shortfall in the crop. Many facing starvation, harvested when the plant was still green.

And everyone now acknowledges that Malawi will need 600,000–700,000 tonnes of food this year. The UN World Food Programme is preparing to buy large consignments. The US is expected to send 100,000 tonnes of maize. Britain has given £5million to groups such as Save The Children.

Only governments have the cash to provide enough food and seeds for the huge numbers of starving. But it will take months.

As Save The Children says: “Every day that passes without a response is a death sentence to hundreds.” And though it admits the country’s very rich have callously exploited its very poor, it says the only humanitarian response is to give generously. And give fast.

Source: *Daily Mirror*, 21 May 2002

Africa at the Crossroads

Time to deliver

AFRICA today stands at a crossroads. The scale of poverty and suffering on the continent is daunting. Three hundred million people live on less than US\$1 per day. Life expectancy is 48 years and falling. More than one-third of all children are malnourished; more than 40 per cent have no access to education. Twenty-eight million people live with HIV/AIDS, and for over 100 million people, war is part of daily life. The crisis facing Africa today is a result of failures at all levels, both within Africa and outside it. Africa needs fair and accountable governance that works in the best interests of poor people. Global trade, investment and diplomatic engagement have too often worked against the interests of the poor.

Other factors behind the crisis include:

- the growth of war economies. The unethical exploitation of natural resources is a major and growing cause of conflict, with disastrous results for local communities. Conflict affects one in five people living in Africa.
- corruption and bribery. Corruption enriches the few and impoverishes the many. It places unbearable burdens on the most vulnerable people, and blocks progress towards poverty reduction.
- HIV/AIDS. The pandemic is a great human tragedy with massive economic and political consequences, particularly for women who make up the majority of those infected.
- inadequate international support. Despite the scale of the crisis, there is less external assistance than ever. Aid is declining, trade rules are rigged against the poor, and debt relief has not been deep enough.

It is morally indefensible that millions of people, whose lives are a daily struggle, are ignored. Moreover, in a world of increasing interdependence and instability, it is in the interests of the leaders of rich developed nations to help find solutions to Africa's problems. If they are left to fester, poverty, conflict and disease will eventually undermine global prosperity and security.

Recent efforts by African and European leaders to work together to tackle these problems offer new opportunities to finally redress the failures and develop a new basis for partnership with Africa. The international community needs to seize this opportunity and commit to concrete actions that will support lasting peace and development.

- Steps must be taken immediately to tackle conflict through concerted diplomatic action.
- The governments of rich developed nations should open their markets to all products from African countries. They should agree a timetable to ban export subsidies and restructure all farm subsidies to achieve social and environmental objectives, rather than increased output.
- The use of conditions attached to IMF/World Bank programmes, which force poor countries to liberalise their markets rapidly, regardless of the impact on poor people should be ended.

Source: Oxfam Policy Paper – May 2002, Oxfam Briefing Paper 19

IMAGES OF AFRICA

Stereotypes and distortions

When one teacher was asked if she intended to produce educational packs on African nations similar to ones she had already published on the Philippines and China, she pointed to a packet on world hunger and responded, “We already have an Africa pack.”

The educator’s response illustrates two problems with the way Africa is perceived. The first is that the African continent, with its 53 countries, is seen to be equivalent to individual nations in other parts of the world. The second problem is that Africa’s nations and peoples are often viewed through the lens of dominant media images such as hunger, famine, or refugees.

A recent study analyses the diversity of issues facing relief agencies and journalists who report on disasters, and concludes that most of the media representations of these issues are over-simplistic and stereotypical. Special attention



Image 1



Image 2

is given to the dominant role of television in conveying images of disasters and relief, and a survey of more than 400 English-language films made about Africa found a mixed legacy of racism, sexism, and imperialism, on the one side, and “occasional” accurate portraits of Africa, on the other.

Questioning media images of Africa raises the related issues of imbalances in the world-wide flow of information and concentrated control of the channels of news dissemination by governments and corporate interests. The international flow of information has been dominated by a handful of Western media monopolies and has created a situation whereby Africans and non-Africans learn about African realities through the filtered lens of news agencies based outside of Africa. (Two news agencies alone – Reuters and Agence-France Presse – control an estimated 93 percent of the news that flows into Africa.)

