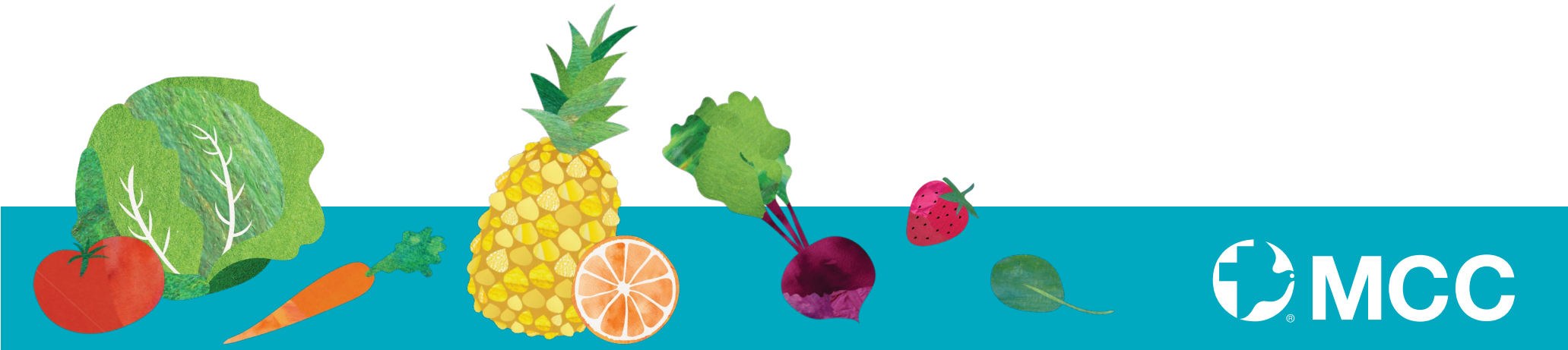


My Coins Count

Food stories for children's time

2025

printable



Lesson 1: Food – For those who have left home – Refugees and displaced people

Today, we want to talk about something that's very important to everyone here. Can anyone guess what it is? **(Hold up a grocery bag with some basics in it – cooking oil, rice, dried beans, flour.)** You are right, food is something that's very important to all of us!

This year, Mennonite Central Committee, or MCC, is using the coins collected through My Coins Count to help provide food for families who are struggling to feed their kids. We're going to talk about some of the ways that is happening over the next few weeks as we collect coins for My Coins Count.

One of the main reasons why there are hungry people in our world is because of war or violence. Wars and arguments between different groups make it unsafe for families to stay in their towns and villages. When that happens, grown-ups are often forced to gather their kids and leave their homes to find someplace where it's safe. Families who have to leave their homes are known as "displaced people." They might move to a different part of the same country, but sometimes people need to flee to a different country altogether. Can you name some places where you've heard of people needing to flee their homes because of wars or violence? Two of the places we'll talk about today are Ukraine and South Sudan.

Every time a family is forced to move to find safety, it makes it harder for the grown-ups to feed their kids. When they move, they leave behind all the food stored in their home or growing in their garden. Because grown-ups have to leave their jobs behind, too, it's harder for them to earn money to buy new food.

Lesson 1: Food – For those who have left home – Refugees and displaced people

MCC works with partners around the world. Together we will use the My Coins Count money to buy food to share with families who don't have the food they need to stay healthy. That might be because of fighting or because of a disaster like a flood or drought. Often families receive the things in this bag – cooking oil, rice, beans, flour and salt. Sometimes, families, like this one in Ukraine, also get canned meat that MCC workers and volunteers prepare. **Hold up photo 1a (Ukraine) or display on a screen.**

The food we share with families is typically dried or sometimes canned. Can anyone guess why? What happens if you leave milk out of the fridge overnight, or let it sit in the fridge for too long? It can go bad pretty quickly. The families we share food with often don't have refrigerators – sometimes, they don't have electricity at all. So we are sure to buy food that lasts a long time without needing to stay cold.

In South Sudan, ongoing conflict and intense flooding have made it so that many families can't stay at their homes. They sometimes move into camps for displaced people. Food can be hard to come by in the camps. People often make do with whatever they can find, even if it means eating water lilies they find growing in flooded areas. To make sure families can enjoy tastier, more filling meals, an MCC partner in South Sudan is sharing monthly food packages with families who have had to leave their homes. **Show photo 1b (South Sudan).** The meals are important sources of energy and nutrition for young people like Zero Mawang Juch (**say Zeer-oh Ma-wang Juch**) and Sudan Koang Ruei (**Soo-dan Ko-ang Roo-ay**), who you can see here with some of the food that is given to families at their camp.

By helping people feed their families, we're showing that we love God by following Jesus' teaching to give food to people who are hungry. Sharing in this way makes a huge difference to hungry kids and makes our world a better place. Thanks for your help with this!



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УКРАЇНИ



Ukraine



South Sudan



Lesson 1 photos: Background information

Photo 1a (Ukraine)

A mother is pictured with one of her children after collecting MCC canned meat from MCC partner Association of Mennonite Brethren Churches of Ukraine (AMBCU) in May 2024. Their names are not provided for security reasons. (Photo courtesy of AMBCU)

Photo 1b (South Sudan)

Zero Mawang Juch and Sudan Koang Ruei sit at a distribution site with a portion of food supplies. (MCC photo/Mackenzie Schwarz)

Lesson 2: Food – Freshly grown and tasty – Gardens

Do any of you have gardens at your house? What kinds of vegetables do you grow? **(Bring in a platter or basket with various easy-to-serve vegetables that might be grown in a home garden – celery, baby carrots, cherry tomatoes, broccoli, etc. With families' permission, you could pass them out during children's time or let children and their families snack on them together later.)**

How many of you like to eat vegetables? Do you know why vegetables are so important to your health?

Vegetables have vitamins and minerals that help kids' bodies grow strong and help to keep you from getting sick so often, which is a very good thing.

But sometimes, food is so expensive that families run out of money before they can buy everything their kids need. When families can grow their own fresh vegetables, they can save money while helping their kids stay healthier. **Hold up photos 2a and 2b (Nepal) or display on a screen.** This is Priyanka Murmu (**say PREE-yun-kuh MORE-mu**), who lives in the lowlands of Nepal, near the India border. Her mom used to work on other people's farms, but then had to go out and buy veggies for her own family at a market. But since getting involved in a women's group that MCC and a Nepali organization helped set up, the family has their own garden. They can save money this way, and the fresh veggies give Priyanka energy to play kabbadi, her favorite tag game, with her big sister and friends. Plus, the food is tasty – Priyanka especially loves the greens they grow!

While there are many benefits to planting gardens, sometimes bad weather can make it hard to grow things. Can you think of some ways that having too much or too little rain might hurt plants?

Lesson 2: Food – Freshly grown and tasty – Gardens

Luckily, there are still ways to grow food in places that get a lot of floods or droughts. Your My Coins Count coins help families learn new ways of planting gardens. MCC partners with organizations around the world, and together they spread the word about these new techniques.

Show photos 2c and 2d (Bangladesh). In Bangladesh, MCC and its partners are working with farmers along the Jamuna River, which is prone to flooding. Families there are planting veggies in bags that can be hung up or put on shelves, and they're creating special gardens that float above floodwaters, keeping plants safe.

Show photo 2e (Puerto Rico). In Puerto Rico, heat waves and storms and hurricanes are becoming more intense and unpredictable. Farmers like Kelmadis Pérez Rivera (**Kel-MAH-dis PER-rez Ree-VAIR-uh**) plant trees in the spaces where they raise crops and livestock. These trees provide shade for all living things and help the soil stay in place and soak up lots of water.

Show photo 2f (Bolivia). Way up in the mountains of Bolivia, the weather is cool and very dry. Greenhouses, like the one Anna Muñoz (**AHN-na MOON-yoz**) has, keep moisture and warmth in, so plants can stay healthy.

Families can eat what they grow, or they can sell it to pay for things like school supplies and clothes. Without their vegetable gardens, some parents would have to go a lot farther from home to earn money.

Lesson 2: Food – Freshly grown and tasty – Gardens

Show photo 2g (Nepal). This is 15-month-old Funcha Magar (**FOON-chuh MUH-ger**). He also lives in Nepal, in the foothills, with his parents, Ishwor Man (**ISH-wor Man**) and Hima (**HEE-muh**) Magar. Work can be hard to find in the region, and it's getting harder to predict the weather, which makes it hard to farm. So a lot of people, mostly young men like Funcha's dad, move away from their families to work in the big city of Kathmandu, or even in another country.

Funcha's dad used to work in India, but then an MCC partner helped him start growing food right by his house. He's learned different ways to keep plants healthy, even though the weather patterns are changing. For example, he's growing macadamia nut trees that help provide shade for coffee and other plants on hot days. And if Funcha needs something, his dad can come right home and help take care of him.

Your My Coins Count coins help families around the world grow gardens that help kids like you get the food they need to stay healthy and active and can even help make sure they get lots of quality time with their parents. It's a way of sharing that makes a difference to hungry kids and helps make the world a better place. Thanks for your help with this!

Nepal





Nepal

Bangladesh



Bangladesh



Puerto Rico



Bolivia



Nepal



Lesson 2 photos: Background information

Photos 2a/b (Nepal)

Priyanka Murmu stands and plays Kabaddi with her friends in Jahada Rural Municipality, Morang, Nepal. (MCC/Fairpicture photo/Uma Bista)

Photo 2c (Bangladesh)

Hena Khatun (**Hen-na Kha-toon**) stands among vegetables in raised planters at her home in Bangladesh. The family keeps enough of their harvest for daily use and has started earning money by selling their excess produce in the market. (MCC/Fairpicture photo/Fabeha Monir)

Photo 2d (Bangladesh)

Maloti Khatun (**Mah-low-tee Kha-toon**) of Bangladesh harvests fresh, leafy vegetables from her floating garden to cook for her family. (MCC/Fairpicture photo/Fabeha Monir)

Photo 2e (Puerto Rico)

Kelmadis Pérez Rivera gives a tour of her Toa Alta, Puerto Rico, farm. (MCC photo/Yujin Kim)

Photo 2f (Bolivia)

Anna Muñoz shows a tour group her greenhouse in El Alto, Bolivia. (MCC photo/Rachel Watson)

Photo 2g (Nepal)

Ishwor Man Magar, a farmer, stands with his wife Hima Magar and son Funcha Magar (15 months old) in Kerabari Rural Municipality, Morang, Nepal. (MCC/Fairpicture photo/Uma Bista)

Lesson 3: Food – From the ground up – Good dirt

What are the things that are needed for gardens to grow? **(Bring a bag/box with a paper sun, a watering can, seeds and some dirt.)** First, you need a place to start planting. Some plants have long roots or tall stems or trunks and might need more space than others. Sunlight is very important, and plants need water just like you and me! You need good seeds that will sprout and grow.

Another important thing is good dirt! Plants need good dirt that can give seeds the nutrients they need to grow and stay healthy. But sometimes good dirt is hard to come by. Floods and landslides can carry healthy soil away, and some land has acted as farmland for so long that all the nutrients get used up. So farmers have to find ways to get nutrients back into the soil.

There are several ways that Mennonite Central Committee, or MCC, partners are helping farmers to make their dirt healthier. **Hold up photo 3a (Rwanda) or display on a screen.** Sometimes it's using the manure from animals, like this goat that Marie Mukamana (**say MAH-ree MU-kah-MAH-nah**) is raising in Rwanda, and mixing it with dirt and grass to make fertilizer. And sometimes farmers can plant different plants together like beans and corn and squash. Since different plants give and take different things from the soil, they are happy to grow together.

Other farmers make their own fertilizers from different plants that grow in their area. Sometimes that means worm composting, or using worms in food scraps and leaves to chew up the rotten food and turn it into good dirt full of healthy things for plants. You can also make compost by mixing food scraps and dried leaves and twigs and letting it all break down into nutrient-rich dirt. Do any of you know someone that makes compost from their food scraps?

Lesson 3: Food – From the ground up – Good dirt

Show photo 3b (Colombia). In Colombia, an MCC partner helps people make natural fertilizer from beets, molasses, grass and algae that grows in local waterways. Healthy soil helps lots of things grow, like the tasty corn that the mom of Deiver José (**say DAY-ver Ho-SAY**) and Leider David (**LAY-der Dah-VEED**) Salgado Pérez (**Sal-GAD-doh PER-rez**) grows in the same part of Colombia. **Show photo 3c (Colombia).**

When farmers can use the things around them instead of having to buy expensive chemical fertilizers, it saves them money and helps them grow healthier food.

When you are collecting coins for My Coins Count, you are helping farmers learn the best ways to grow food in their special situations. Soil health can be a tricky thing for farmers. As all farmers know, including farmers in this country, everyone's dirt is different, and the weather patterns are different in different parts of the world. When dirt is too wet or too dry, it's harder for plants to stay healthy.

Mennonite Central Committee has partners who are helping farmers overcome the challenges of changing weather and worn-out dirt. It's one of the ways your coins are helping kids have the food they need to stay healthier so they have energy to do things they want to do, like go to school, hang out with their friends and help their parents around the house. Making good dirt is making a difference in the world. Thanks for your help with this!

Rwanda



Colombia





Colombia



Lesson 3 photos: Background information

Photo 3a (Rwanda)

Marie Mukamana tends to her goat, which she received through an MCC-supported conservation agriculture project in Rwanda. (MCC/Fairpicture photo/Denyse Kamugwiza Uwera)

Photo 3b (Colombia)

Oscar Torres (**OS-car TOR-res**), Andres Ruiz (**An-DRES Ru-IZ**), Etel Salas (**ET-tel SAH-las**) and Jefferson Arroyo Alvarez (**JEF-fair-sohn Ah-ROY-oh AL-vah-rez**) make an organic fertilizer mixture at Ruiz's home in Colombia. This homemade fertilizer contains four ingredients that are easy for farmers to find near their homes or purchase cheaply: beets, molasses, grass and freshwater algae that grows nearby. (MCC photo/Annalee Giesbrecht)

Photo 3c (Colombia)

Deiver José Salgado Pérez and Leider David Salgado Pérez harvest corn in their family's field in Colombia. (MCC photo/Annalee Giesbrecht)

Lesson 4: Food – Everything is connected – Closed-loop farming

Did you know that raising different kinds of living things together can help all of God's creation do better? It can help all the plants and critters find their place in the cycle of life. **(Bring a bag with a small bag of rice, a vegetable with an inedible stem or skin, a hard-boiled egg and a rubber fish).**

In Cambodia, some of our friends have found an amazing way to use different plants and animals to benefit everyone involved.

Hold up photo 4a (Cambodia) or show on screen. This is 7-year-old Ta Vickka (**say Tah Vic-Kah**), and her mom, Saroeun Vickka (**Sa-rune Vic-Kah**). The family has a pond close to their home in rural Cambodia, and in this picture, they're working together to catch fish. Fish are a great source of protein for families and can also be sold to make extra money.

But that's not the only way the pond helps families in their village get the food they need. **Show photos 4b and 4c (Cambodia).** People also use the water to irrigate (or water) their rice and vegetable fields during the dry season, and to keep livestock hydrated and healthy. That means more crops in the fields and more eggs from chickens, like these that Rath Morn (**Rath Mourn**) and Jhonh Nham (**Johnh Nhoam**), the grandparents of 4-year-old Kry Panut (**Cray Pah-nuht**), are raising in Cambodia.

Hold up the vegetable. There are often parts of plants that humans don't eat, like watermelon rinds and the vines where squashes grow. These can often be chopped up and given to the animals a family raises. Then, as we talked about last time, the waste from those animals can be spread on garden plots to help vegetables grow big and strong!

Lesson 4: Food – Everything is connected – Closed-loop farming

Hold up the items from the bag as you speak. Techniques like these create a whole cycle of connectivity between the farmers and their critters and gardens. Farmers get water for growing vegetables and rice, plus fresh meat and eggs to eat or sell.

Show photo 4d (Kenya). In some communities, like this one in Kenya, farmers are also caring for their crops by learning to build beehives, so that bees can eat the nectar from plants and spread pollen to other plants. Without pollination, we wouldn't have foods like tomatoes and squashes. Plus, families can eat or sell the honey.

Can you name any other critters that pollinate plants? Butterflies, hummingbirds and bats are other examples of pollinators. And they all play an important role in growing fruits and many veggies.

Your coins for My Coins Count are helping MCC partners share ideas like these so that farmers can grow more diverse and healthy food to feed their families. They can sell any extra food at the market to pay for other things the family needs like school supplies and doctor bills. You are making the world a better place for farmers and their kids and grandkids in Cambodia and around the world. Thank you for your help!

Cambodia



Cambodia



Cambodia



4c



Kenya

4d

Lesson 4 photos: Background information

Photo 4a (Cambodia)

Saroeun Vickka and her daughter, Ta Vickka, 7, catch protein-rich fish by net in an irrigation pond near their home in Cambodia. (MCC photo/Isaac Alderfer)

Photos 4b/c (Cambodia)

Kry Panut, 4, joins his grandmother, Jhonh Nham, and grandfather, Rath Morn, at their farm, where they raise vegetables, fish and chickens. (MCC photo/Isaac Alderfer)

Photo 4d (Kenya)

Agriculture officer Jonathan Muoki, right, introduces farmers in Makueni County, Kenya, to the parts of a hive. (MCC photo/James Kanyari)

Appendix: Multimedia stories

YouTube and TikTok videos on MCC food and livelihoods projects:

Chicken, Fish and Veggies – a sustainable relationship

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ECT3fjY9sWg>

Hello from Cambodia

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXWAb1-rc1o>

Jesmin's safe garden

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a_6SAg5ANkA

Saving crops, saving lives in Bangladesh

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGAv69u-iZU&t=4s>

Floating gardens in Bangladesh

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=COvhRGSQwRg>

Let's visit Finca Eirene

<https://www.tiktok.com/@mccpeace/video/7393347787728981279>

My Coins Count Song

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s4rV2clOLJA>

