



# What are we doing here●

[www.whatarewedoinghere.net](http://www.whatarewedoinghere.net)

## Teacher's Guide

### Overview

Over the past 45 years, Western countries have given over \$600 billion in humanitarian aid to Africa. Despite this aid, poverty in Africa has increased. The award winning documentary film, *What are we doing here?* takes viewers on a travel adventure story from Cairo to Cape Town as the filmmakers explore the effects of foreign aid in Africa.

The teacher's guide accompanies the film *What are we doing here?*. Designed for middle and high school classes, as well as for college students, it provides discussion questions and standards-based learning exercises that invite examination of the documentary's primary themes:

- Has foreign aid helped or hurt Africa?
- What are the root causes of poverty in Africa?
- What should the role of the West be in Africa?
- Are good intentions enough?
- Why has western aid failed to reduce poverty in Africa?

The resource guide is divided into five sections:

1. Pre- and post-viewing discussion questions that challenge students to look more broadly at the West's and the students' relationship with Africa.
2. Relevant clips from *What are we doing here?* that correspond with discussion/activity questions. It is suggested that students watch the film in its entirety; video clips may be replayed to spur discussion.
3. Extended learning activities that encourage students to further their knowledge about aid to Africa.
4. Online and print resources.
5. National Standards

The film, coupled with the guide's offerings, will heighten students' ability to think critically about issues surrounding Africa, poverty, foreign aid, and US/European relations with Africa.

To purchase a copy of *What are we doing here?* for your class, contact Films for the Humanities and Science at 1-800-257-5126 or [order@films.com](mailto:order@films.com) or go to [www.whatarewedoinghere.net](http://www.whatarewedoinghere.net)

## Lesson Objectives

Students will:

1. Describe the extent and impact of poverty in Africa
2. Give examples of how the West has responded to poverty in Africa
3. Form and share their opinions on the effects of foreign aid in Africa
4. Examine the way the media presents Africa and the way the media influences their own perception of Africa
5. Assess the relationship between Western nations, like the US, and African nations

## Materials

- DVD of *What are we doing here?*
- DVD player and LCD projector
- Computers with Internet access
- Character profiles of individuals that appear in *What are we doing here?*, available on [www.whatarewedoinghere.net](http://www.whatarewedoinghere.net)
- Map of Africa, available on [www.whatarewedoinghere.net](http://www.whatarewedoinghere.net)

**Sample Lesson Plan/Suggested Time (based on a 50-minute class period)** – all activities in lesson plan are outlined in detail

**Class 1:** 15 min - introduction of film and discussion on students' perception of Africa  
30 min – watch first part of documentary film *What are we doing here?*

**Class 2:** 50 min – finish *What are we doing here?*

**Class 3:** 30 min – post screening general discussion on questions surrounding “the effects of foreign aid in Africa?”

15 min – divide class into groups and start researching one of the group presentation questions that corresponds to a section/examples in the film

**Class 4:** 50 min – group research time - where groups can re-watch the sections of the film that correspond with their presentation question and plan their presentation to the class

**Class 5:** 50 min – groups present and lead a discuss on their research question

**Class 6:** 25 min – listen to web radio debate - “Is Aid to Africa Doing More Harm Than Good?”  
20 min – hold a class debate on the same topic

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## Terms and Definitions

- NGO – Non Governmental Organization
- USAID – United States Agency for International Development
- UNHCR – United Nations High Commission on Refugees
- UNDP – United Nations Development Program
- WFP – World Food Program, United Nations
- UNICEF – United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
- Refugee – A person who is forced to flee from his or her home nation into another country because of persecution. Most often refugees are a result of war. Here is the official UNHCR definition:

*A person who is outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution.*

## Pre-viewing Class Discussion Questions

1. When you think of Africa, what comes to mind?
2. Have you ever heard news stories about Africa or read any books/articles about Africa? Explain. What did those stories, books, and articles make you think about Africa?
3. Have you ever seen a late night commercial for an aid organization asking you to give money to help save a starving child in Africa? Describe the commercial. What did that commercial make you think about Africa?
4. What is poverty? What does it mean to live in poverty? Do we have poverty in the USA? Explain.

## Pre-viewing Learning Activities

1. Have student brainstorm and create a list of what they know about Africa. As a class, analyze these thoughts. Are they positive or negative? Are they specific or general? What are these perceptions based on? Media? Movies? Other?
2. Have students watch a few commercials by aid organizations that are available at [www.whatarewedointhere.net](http://www.whatarewedointhere.net). Instruct students to create a list of humanitarian organizations (e.g. Save the Children, USAID, CARE, World Vision, United Nations). Then have short discussion or write a short essay about NGO's (Non Governmental Organizations). What do these NGO's do? Why do you think these organizations do the work they do? What is the goal of these advertisements? What do these advertisements make you think about Africa/Africans?
3. Watch the 10-minute video clip on colonialism from [Uganda Rising](#) (listed in the resource section). Have students discuss or write a short essay on what the effects of colonialism may have had on Africa today.

## Post-viewing General Class Discussion Questions

1. Is foreign aid helping or hurting Africa? Should aid be increased or decreased?
2. If aid should be decreased or stopped, what should the role of the US be in Africa and how should we respond to the millions of people living in poverty? If aid should be increased, how can we make sure that it isn't wasted or doesn't cause harm?
3. What do you think should be done about poverty in Africa?
4. If someone has good intentions and is trying to help, is it correct to criticize their efforts and say that they are hurting instead of helping?
5. Did your perception of Africa change after watching this film? What did you learn?
6. Would you ever give money or work for an NGO/charity fighting poverty in Africa? Why or why not? Do Africans need foreign aid?
7. Why doesn't the USA have the same level of poverty that Africa has? How is poverty in Africa different from poverty in USA? What does our government do to help people get out of poverty?

## Group Presentation Questions, with clips from film

Divide the class into eight groups and give each group a question (from the questions that follow). Have each group discuss and research the questions. Allow groups one at a time to view the clip that corresponds with their respective questions.

Then each group will present to the rest of the class their response as well as showing a clip that is related to their response.

1. What did Somaliland teach us about foreign aid? How does Somaliland differ from Somalia and other African countries? Think about the man who was driving a car while talking about foreign aid's effects on Somalia during the civil war: what did he think the effects of that aid were? Describe some of the lessons we can learn Somalia/Somaliland so that aid is used more effectively.
  - i. Clip: Somaliland (5 min) 00:41:53 – 00:47:35
2. Is it possible that foreign aid both helps in some ways and causes harm in other ways? What are examples from the film that show how aid can cause harm? What are examples from the film that demonstrate how aid can help? Describe some of the lessons we can learn from these examples in order to make aid more effective and less harmful.
  - i. Clips demonstrating how aid can cause harm
    - food aid in Sudan/Ethiopia (6 min) 00:09:16 - 00:15:42
    - aid supporting dictators Somaliland (4 min) 00:43:57 - 00:47:35
    - aid prolonging post genocide fighting in Rwanda (2 min) 00:49:42 - 51:20
  - ii. Clips demonstrating how aid can help
    - Patrick and Margarite in Rwanda (9 min) 00:51:20 – 01:00:00
    - Microfinance (3 min) 01:04:33 - 1:07:07
    - Emile in South Africa (3 min) 1:14:45 - 1:17:52
3. How can food aid cause harm? How does giving someone free food affect his or her own ability to produce food? How does food aid affect the local food market and an African farmer's ability to sell food? Describe some of the lessons we can learn from these examples in order to make food aid more effective and less harmful.

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- i. Clip: food aid in Sudan/Ethiopia (10 min) 00:4:54- 00:15:42
  - ii. Clip: Dependency in N.E. Kenya (3 min) 00:38:52 - 00:41:53
4. What happened after the Rwanda genocide to the refugees that fled the country? What impact did the UN and other humanitarian organizations -- that were delivering food aid, medical support and housing -- have on the fighting? Would you help the perpetrators of genocide if it were the only way to help thousands of innocent victims who were fleeing the fighting? Explain. Describe some of the lessons we can learn from this example in order to make sure that aid doesn't cause harm.
- i. Clip: (2 min) 00:49:42 - 51:20
5. Why did the Khadija, the lady who ran the AIDS orphanage in N.E. Kenya, say that giving more money wouldn't solve the problem? Describe some of the lessons we can learn from Khadija in order to make aid more effective.
- i. Clip: (10 min) 00:21:39 - 00:31:20
6. Why is there a famine in N.E. Kenya each year? Why did the pastoralist who was interviewed by Sarah (the Kenyan journalist) say that aid projects don't help? What did he say the problem was with the aid? Describe some of the lessons we can learn Sarah and the pastoralist in order to make aid more effective.
- i. Clip: (2 min) 00:38:52 - 00:40:01
  - ii. Clip: extended segment (5 min) 00:36:21 – 00:41:50
7. What did the organic farmer in Malawi, Dr. Chinkanutha, say was the solution to Africa's problems. Why did he favor investment over aid? Describe some of the lessons we can learn from Dr. Chinkanutha.
- i. Clip: (2 min) 01:07:10 - 01:09:45
8. What role does politics play in development? What did UNDP Director Michael Keating mean when he said "if aid dollars go into a machine that is unaccountable ...it's going to make things worse"? Describe some example from the film of aid being "unaccountable"? What can we do to make aid more accountable?
- i. Clip: (2 min) 1:09:55 - 1:11:41

## Extended Activities

1. Have students listen to the radio debate "Is Aid To Africa Doing More Harm Than Good?" that was broadcast on NPR <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=17095866> (more information below in the resource section). Take a poll of which students think 1. aid is helping, 2. aid is hurting or 3. haven't decided. Have students prepare arguments and have the class debate on the same topic. After the debate, take another class poll and find out if the debate changed the class perception of whether aid is helping or hurting. If you want to add another element of interest for the students, videotape the debate and put it on YouTube.
2. Have students read one of the books from the resource section. Then write a book report that relates the book to their overall feelings on foreign aid in Africa. Books that are appropriate for grade school students are indicated.

## Related Resources

### Websites

[www.whatarewedoinghere.net](http://www.whatarewedoinghere.net) - Official website for the film, "What are we doing here?" Get more information on the film and the individuals from the film and articles around the topic of foreign aid.

[www.globalissues.org/](http://www.globalissues.org/) - Global Issues has information on poverty and development around the world, including Africa. Facts, studies, statistics, articles on the root causes of poverty, food aid, corruption, foreign aid, and world hunger. Full of short articles that are easy to read.

[www.crisisgroup.org/](http://www.crisisgroup.org/) - International Crisis Group has up to date information and analysis on conflicts around the world. Some of the most in-depth information available, but is written at a slightly more advanced level.

<http://africaunchained.blogspot.com/> - Africa Unchained is a platform for analyzing and contributing to the issues and solutions surrounding Africa. The discussion focuses on the issues raised by George Ayittey's latest book 'Africa Unchained'.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/default.stm> - BBC Africa page - there is a lot of general information on individual African countries, good for basic background information.

### United Nations agency websites

Information on refugees, UNHCR official site - [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)

World Food Program official site - [www.wfp.org](http://www.wfp.org)

United Nations Development Program official site - [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)

United Nations Food and Agriculture official site - [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)

UN World Health Organization - [www.who.int/en/](http://www.who.int/en/)

UNICEF - [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

## Web radio/video broadcasts

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=17095866> - NPR debate on the question "has aid to Africa caused harm?" Very interesting debate between some of the top minds involved in Africa (authors William Easterly and George Ayittey, and NY Times writer David Rieff). Easy to understand for students, a great resource. 50 min broadcast, but it can be broken up into smaller segments.

[http://speakingoffaith.publicradio.org/programs/2008/ethics\\_of\\_aid-kenya/index.shtml](http://speakingoffaith.publicradio.org/programs/2008/ethics_of_aid-kenya/index.shtml) - A conversation looking at the ethics of global aid with a young writer from Kenya, who questions the efficiency and effects of foreign aid.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pw12KGSj53k&eurl=http://www.globalissues.org/article/84/conflicts-in-africa-introduction&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pw12KGSj53k&eurl=http://www.globalissues.org/article/84/conflicts-in-africa-introduction&feature=player_embedded) - clip on Colonialism in Africa from documentary *Uganda Rising*

## Books (NOTE TO TEACHER: books with a \* next to them are appropriate for grade school students)

Ayittey, George B.N. *Africa Unchained: The Blueprint for Africa's Future*. Palgrave Macmillan, September 1, 2006.

Calderisi, Robert. *The Trouble with Africa: Why Foreign Aid Isn't Working*. Palgrave Macmillan, May 29, 2007.

\*Dichter, Thomas. *Despite Good Intentions: Why Development Assistance to the Third World has Failed*. University of Massachusetts Press, January 2003.

Easterly, William. *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good*. Penguin, February 27, 2007.

Ferguson, James. *The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development," Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. University of Minnesota Press, January, 1994.

\*Lappe, Frances Moore and Collins, Joseph. *Aid as Obstacle; Twenty Questions about our Foreign Aid and the Hungry*. San Francisco: Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1980.

\*Lappé, Frances Moore. *World hunger : 12 myths*. Grove Press, September 24, 1998.

\*Maren, Michael *The Road to Hell: The Ravaging Effects of Foreign Aid and International Charity*. Free Press, July 1, 2002.

Rieff, David. *A Bed for the Night: Humanitarianism in Crisis* Simon & Schuster, September 30, 2003.

Waal, Alex de. *Famine Crimes: Politics and the Disaster Relief Industry in Africa*. Oxford: James Currey, 1997.

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## National Standards

### National Council for Economic Education

#### Standard 1 : Scarcity

Students will understand that:

Productive resources are limited. Therefore, people can not have all the goods and services they want; as a result, they must choose some things and give up other

#### Standard 15 : Growth

Investment in factories, machinery, new technology, and in the health, education, and training of people can raise future standards of living.

### National Council of Teachers of English/International Reading Association

#### Standards for the English Language Arts

7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

### National Center for History in the Schools

#### National Standards in United States and World History

##### World History

**Standard 2:** The search for community, stability, and peace in an interdependent world.

**Standard 2B:** The student understands how increasing economic interdependence has transformed human society.

\* Analyze why economic disparities between industrialized and developing countries have persisted or increased and how both neo-colonialism and authoritarian political leadership have affected development in African and Asian countries.

**Standard 3:** Major global trends since World War I

**Standard 3A:** The student understands major global trends since World War II.

\* Analyze causes of economic imbalances and social inequalities among the world's peoples and assess efforts made to close these gaps.

### National Council for the Social Studies

#### VI. Power, authority, and Governance

• Examine persistent issues involving the rights, roles and status of the individual in relation to the general welfare.

#### IX. Global Connections

\* Explain conditions and motivations that contribute to conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among groups, societies, and nations.

\* Analyze the relationships and tensions between national sovereignty and global interests, in matters such as territory, economic development, nuclear and other weapons, use of natural resources, and human rights concerns.

\* Illustrate how individual behaviors and decisions connect with global systems.

**National Geographic****National Geography Standards**

The patterns and networks of economic interdependence on earth's surface

**Standard 16:** The changes that occur in the meaning, use, distribution, and importance of resources

**Standard 18:** How to apply geography to interpret the present and plan for the future