Crisis in Africa

Can the World's Richest Nations Save the World's Poorest Continent?

Taha, a teenager who lives in the African nation of Sudan, paints pictures about something with which she is familiar: the horrors of war. One painting shows helicopters hovering in the sky and houses ablaze.¹

Over the past several years, Taha has watched a brutal civil war rip through Darfur, a region in western Sudan. The conflict has left thousands of Sudanese dead and more than 2 million homeless. The images of soldiers and guns are forever etched in her mind.

"My nights are hard because I feel frightened," Taha writes on one drawing.

The war in Sudan is just one of the many problems that plague Africa. For example, thousands of Ethiopians don't have enough to eat. In Chad, a measles epidemic² is swept the nation a couple years ago. In

¹ ablaze: on fire
² epidemic: a sudden rapidly spreading outbreak of a disease
Nigeria, there are 1.8 million orphans whose parents have died of AIDS, a disease transmitted by body fluids.

**Helping Hands**

Africa's problems have become so bad that the world's richest nations are working to help end the strife. The leaders of those countries—the Group of 8 (G8)—have held meetings to discuss what is happening in Africa. The G8 countries are the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Japan, Canada, Italy, and Russia.

At the end of the G8 meeting in Scotland in 2005, the G8 nations decided to double the money each of them gives to Africa. In addition, many African countries will not have to pay back billions of dollars borrowed from the G8. That means African leaders will be able to spend more money to combat their problems.

**Poverty and Other Problems**

Officials hope these and other steps will help eliminate poverty, one of the biggest problems Africa faces. According to the World Bank, one in six Africans has only enough money to cover his or her basic needs.

In many African nations, the average person makes less than $750 a year. Half of all Africans live on less than $1 a day. Most children do not go to school, because it is expensive or because they have to work.
Poverty is just one of the problems Africans face. Other problems include:

- **Starvation:** Hunger is a leading cause of death in the countries south of the Sahara desert. Most people cannot afford to buy food. In addition, severe droughts also destroy crops, leaving the land dry and dusty. People are malnourished when they have a poor diet, which usually results in bad health. In the countries that make up Central Africa, for example, 45.2 million people are malnourished. It is estimated that 239 million people in sub-Saharan Africa are suffering from hunger.

- **War:** Since 1980, there have been approximately 28 civil wars in Africa. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, about 4 million people died between 1998 and 2002. The various wars have created about 13 million **refugees**. A refugee is a person who flees to escape a war or natural disaster.

- **Disease:** Various diseases, such as measles, malaria, polio, and AIDS, are widespread in Africa. About 756,000 Africans died in 2008 of malaria, a disease caused by **parasites**.3

**Some Progress**

Progress in combating these and other problems is being made, however. Aid organizations are working hard to feed, clothe, and provide health care for thousands.

The world’s leaders say the future of the continent rests with Africans themselves.

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3 **parasite:** an organism that lives on or in another living thing
1. Which of the following is not an effect of starvation?
   A  death  
   B  bad health  
   C  severe drought  
   D  malnourishment

2. The map is included to help the reader
   A  understand the physical geography of Africa  
   B  differentiate the countries of Africa  
   C  identify the oceans that surround Africa  
   D  recognize the levels of undernourishment in Africa

3. What can be concluded about the wealth of the African countries in comparison with the wealth of the Group of 8 countries?
   A  Most Group of 8 countries have more wealth than most African countries.  
   B  The Group of 8 countries have more wealth combined than all African countries.  
   C  African countries have more wealth combined than the Group of 8 countries.  
   D  The Group of 8 countries have double the wealth of the African countries.

4. Read the sentence:
   “Progress in combating these and other problems is being made, however.”
   What word below could best replace combating as used in this sentence?
   A  fighting  
   B  healing  
   C  causing  
   D  creating

5. What is this passage mostly about?
   A  the effects of war on the children and families of Africa  
   B  the causes of problems in Africa, including drought and civil war  
   C  the current problems in Africa and one possible solution  
   D  the best solutions to combat starvation and disease
6. Use evidence from the text to describe the level of poverty in Africa.

______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

7. What does the author mean in the following statement? “The war in Sudan is just one of the many problems that plague Africa.” Define plague in your answer, and use evidence from the text to support your answer.

______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

The leaders of the G8 decided to double the money given to Africa ________ meeting in Scotland in 2005.

A while
B currently
C meanwhile
D consequently
9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

In many African nations, the average person makes less than $750 a year.

Who? the average person

Does what? _____________________________________________________________

Where? ________________________________________________________________

10. **Vocabulary Word**: hovering (*adjective*): floating or lingering in the air.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: ______________________________________