

Picture games

A picture says a thousand words and the camera does not lie - or does it?

- Themes** General Human Rights, Media, Discrimination and Xenophobia,
- Complexity** Level I
- Group size** Any
- Time** 30 minutes
- Overview** Working with images is creative and fun, and these activities make good icebreakers while having value in their own right. They focus on issues about:
- Stereotypes
 - How each person perceives the world in a unique way
 - How images are used to inform and mis-inform
- Related rights** Any: depending the pictures and the issues you choose to address
- Objectives**
- To raise awareness about the relevance of human rights to everyday life
 - To develop “visual literacy” skills, listening and communication skills
 - To promote empathy and respect for human dignity


I. What do you see?


- Materials**
- A set of photos
 - Stiff card, glue, sticky-backed plastic (optional)
 - Board, large sheets of paper or flipchart paper, and markers
 - A wall chart listing the Articles of the UDHR (copied from the abridged version on page 402)
- Preparation**
- Collect together a set of 25 pictures showing people in different countries and different settings.
 - Back the pictures with stiff card and cover with sticky-backed plastic for durability (optional)
 - Number the pictures


Instructions

1. Lay the pictures out on tables round the room.
2. Tell people to work individually.
3. Read out *one* of the articles from the UDHR and write it up on the board/flip chart.
4. Ask people to look at the photographs and to choose the one that in their opinion best represents the article.
5. Then ask each person in turn to say which picture they chose and why.
6. Make a note of which pictures were chosen; write the numbers on the board.
7. Do four or five more rounds naming different articles from the UDHR. (Choose a mixture of the civil and political and social and economic rights.)


THEMES

 GEN. HUMAN RIGHTS


 MEDIA

 DISCRIMINATION


COMPLEXITY

 LEVEL I

GROUP SIZE

 ANY

TIME

 30 MINUTES

Debriefing and evaluation

Start with a review of the activity itself and then go on to talk about what people learned.

- Was it difficult to choose pictures to represent the different rights? Did individuals choose different pictures in the different rounds, or did they think that one or two pictures said it all?
- Did different people choose the same pictures in the different rounds, or did people have very different ideas about what represented the different rights? What does this tell us about how each of us sees the world?
- Review the list on the flipchart. Which photographs were chosen most often? What was special about these images? Why were they chosen often? Did the size or colour make a difference, or was it what was in the picture that was significant?
- Was any individual picture chosen to represent several different rights?
- Did anyone disagree with anyone else's interpretation of a particular picture?
- Were there any photos that were never chosen? Could they nonetheless be interpreted to represent a human right? Which rights? People should explain the reason for their choices.
- Did people know that they have all the rights that were talked about in the course of the activity? If not, which ones did they not know about?
- How do the media use and mis-use images? Pick one example of a current event and analyse how it is presented in the newspapers and on the television. How are the related human rights issues presented?

Tips for facilitators

There is no limit on the number of times a particular photograph can be chosen. One particular image may be chosen several times in one round, or it may be chosen in different rounds. In other words, it may represent one of the articles to several people, or it may represent different articles to different people.

Refer to section "How to use COMPASS", on page 38 for more information about making your own set of photos. You can collect images from colour magazines, travel brochures, old calendars and post cards. Be sure that there is no text with any of the pictures, but make a note of each picture's original caption or other information, so you can answer questions about it. The pictures should show a wide variety of aspects of "life on earth"; they should include images of individuals and groups, people of different ages, cultures and abilities. There should be pictures in rural and urban settings, of industry and agriculture, people doing different sorts of work and leisure activities. Don't try to put the pictures in any sort of order when you number them. The purpose of the numbers is just so the pictures can easily be identified.

It will depend on the group and their general skills of "visual literacy" how much you need to guide the participants to analyse the pictures. You may consider starting the activity with a joint analysis of one or two of the pictures. The questions presented in the "further information" section below can be used as a guide.

Variations

You could also ask people to pick the one that for them best represents the concept of human rights. When everyone has chosen, ask them to give their reasons.

Suggestions for follow-up

Borrow cameras, or look out for some of the disposable ones when they are on sale, and make a project to photograph “Views on human rights” in your locality.

Images do not only come from pictures; they also come from situations and events. Let the group “see” discrimination through the activity “Take a step forward”, on page 217.

Ideas for action

Make an exhibition of photographs from the “Views on human rights” project. Alternatively, develop some of the ideas for posters from the “Other picture games” below and use them for an exhibition.

Further information

“Reading” pictures is a skill, which has to be learned and developed. People talk of literacy skills, meaning skills to recognise the letters of the alphabet and to read the printed word. But the term implies more than that. It also refers to skills of analysing, understanding and interpreting the text as a whole. In much the same way, some people talk about “visual literacy” to describe the skills of “reading” an image. To “read” a picture, you have to ask who made the image and why they made it in the way they did - what are their motives? You also have to be aware of the emotional impact the picture has and how it affects your attitude to the subject. You may like to ask yourself the following questions while looking at the pictures of the “Fighters for rights”, on page 130:

The subject: who, what, where and when?

- Who is portrayed; what is their age, sex, health, wealth or status?
- What does their posture and facial expression tell me about them?
- Is the subject aware that they are being photographed? Was the picture posed, or is it natural?
- What are the surroundings like? Do they harmonise with the person, or do they contrast with him/her?
- What are they doing? Is it a normal activity, or something special?
- What is your overall impression of the person? Is it positive or negative, sympathetic or disinterested?

The context

- Where was the picture originally published? In a newspaper, magazine or travel brochure? In other words, was it being used for information, sales, or propaganda? Or what?
- Is there a title or any other information with the picture that seals the message which the photographer wants the viewer to receive?

Technical details

- Is the picture in black and white or in colour? Does this affect the impact it has on you? Would the picture have a bigger impact if it were larger?
- Are you impressed by the angle the picture was taken at?
- What special effects have been used, such as soft lighting or focusing? Why?
- Has the image been manipulated? Does the picture lie? Is the image actually what was in front of the photographer when they took the picture, or have they used a computer to retouch the image (to make the person look more glamorous, for example?)

Who took the picture?

- What is the relationship between the photographer and the subject?
- Are they sympathetic to their subject?
- Are they being paid, or is it an amateur snapshot?
- Why did the photographer want to take the picture? What were their motives? What were they trying to “tell us” with the picture?

To conclude, *what* visual symbols or stereotypes have you recognised? For example, Martin Luther King as the political leader standing over his people, or Ngawang Sangdrol as a Tibetan peasant? *Why* did the editors of this manual choose these photographs to be used with the activity? *What* effect do these images have on your attitude to the person portrayed? Do they add anything to your appreciation of the person over and above what you read in the texts? *How? Why?*

Source: Information adapted from “Focus for Change” (Class, gender and race inequality and the media in an international context.) Focus for Change, 1992. (103 London Street, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 4QA, England.)

2. What do you see in Pancho?

Materials/preparation

- Photocopy all of Pancho’s illustrations in the manual (see chapter 5). Enlarge them if possible.
- Make duplicate sets of the illustrations, one set per small group

Instructions

1. Ask people to get into small groups.
2. Give one set of Pancho’s illustrations to each group and ask the participants to look at all the pictures and then, individually, to choose the one that appeals to them the most - for whatever reasons.
3. When everyone has chosen, then each person in turn should share their choice saying:
 - What the cartoon says to them
 - Why they chose the picture
 - How it relates to their concerns and reality
 - How they see it relating to human rights
4. After each turn the rest of the group should share their reactions.
5. When all have finished, ask everybody to come into plenary.

Debriefing and evaluation

Get brief feedback from each group about their general impressions and continue with questions as described in the first picture game, “What do you see?”, on page 189.

Tips for facilitators

You could use Pancho’s illustrations in other ways. For example ask people to write captions or you could white-out the texts in the speech bubbles and ask people to write their own. Please make your participants aware of the importance to respect artists’ copyrights.

3. Part of the picture

Materials/preparation

- Find pictures that tell a simple story. Cut them into two parts in such a way that separately the two images encourage the viewer to read the situation in a way which is quite different from the way they would read the situation if they read the two images together as a whole.
- Put the picture sets in separate envelopes. You need one set per participant.

Instructions

1. Ask people to get into pairs.
2. Give each pair two envelopes.
3. Tell participants to take turns to open an envelope and give their partner one part of the picture inside. Let the partner say what they think is going on in the picture, who the subject is and what they are doing.
4. Then, the first participant should hand over the second piece and ask their partner what they think is happening now that they have the full picture.
5. Go on to a short debriefing:
 - What surprises were there?
 - How often do people accept what they see and forget that it may not be the “whole story”?

Tips for facilitators

You can use this activity as an icebreaker or you can develop it further by getting the pairs to swap their pictures with another pair and repeating the activity. Do people find it easier the second time round? Or is it more challenging? Why?

4. Captions for pictures

Materials/preparation

- Numbered pictures
- Paper and pens, one per participant
- Scissors and tape
- Large sheets of paper (A3) or flipchart paper. You will need as many pieces of paper as you have pictures.

Instructions

1. Lay the pictures out on a table and ask participants either individually or in pairs to write captions for each of the pictures. They should keep their writing neat because later they will cut the captions out.
2. When everyone is finished, hold up the pictures one at a time and invite volunteers to read out their captions.
3. Glue the picture in the centre of a large sheet of paper and ask people to glue their captions around the picture to make a “poster”.
4. Tape the posters to the wall.

5. Go on to a brief review of the different pictures and their captions.
 - How difficult was it to write captions?
 - What makes a good caption?
 - If a picture can say a thousand words, why do they need captions?

Key date**21 March**

Word Poetry Day

Tips for facilitators

Using coloured paper and pens for the captions makes the posters more attractive. Using this method to get several different captions for each picture is usually both amusing and provocative. People are engaged and prepared for a good discussion. The captions are an ideal base for making the point that each person sees the world in a unique way, which should be respected.

5. Speech bubbles

Materials/preparation

- Pictures, one picture per pair. (Two or more pairs should get the same picture.)
- Paper and pen, one between two people
- Glue

Instructions

1. Ask people to get into pairs. Hand out the pictures, sheets of paper and pens.
2. Invite them to analyse the Who? What? Where? When? and How? of the picture.
3. Tell them to glue the picture onto the paper and to write speech bubbles for the characters in the picture.
4. Ask the pairs to share their work and go on to a short debriefing:
 - How hard was it to analyse the pictures and to write speech bubbles?
 - For the pairs who had the same picture - how do your analyses of your pictures compare?
 - What stereotypes did people find in the pictures and in the speech bubbles?

Tips for facilitators

You do not have to restrict the group to pictures of people. Why not include some pictures with animals? This can be especially fruitful if you want to get people to talk about stereotypes. You can start out by pointing out how often animals are cast as stereotypes in cartoons and then get the group to look for examples of stereotyping in their pictures and speech bubbles.