



Using Photos to Explore Issues

Before using the photos, please laminate them for future use

It is easy and fun to learn from photographs and the secret is to learn how to 'read' a photograph. When you learn to 'read' a photograph you will be developing the skill of **visual literacy** and using it to develop other related skills. You will find six photographs with questions following, and with many more that you can download for *Food Matters*.

Why use photographs in learning?

Photographs are useful to use because they:

- are open-ended so people can interpret them in their own way
- do not require high levels of literacy
- allow groups to determine for themselves what issues should be discussed
- encourage groups and individuals to recognise that not everyone sees the world in the same way or through the same lens
- allow for creative learning outside a fixed agenda.

Photographs provide a very rich source of exploration and discovery. In order to fully benefit from them, planning and organised investigation is needed, especially when it is pursued in groups. The activities presented in the following pages are designed to support such exploration and discovery as well as to stimulate discussion on many important issues and challenges.

Introducing the photographs

The following general activities are useful for introducing the photographs and for helping people become familiar with them and with what they see happening in them. The activities are also useful for generating individual and group discussion and co-operation. Reviewing and describing photos is also important before identifying and discussing the issues and/or the questions and challenges they raise.

In using photos, it is more productive to have people work in pairs or small groups initially, and to then compare and contrast choices and descriptions in the larger group.

Selecting

Ask the group to look carefully at the whole set of photos, ask each individual or pair to choose one or

two photos which they find particularly interesting or which raise important questions for them. People can then form small groups (for example, four or six) and explain to each other their choices. Each small group then selects one or two photos from the group and explains their choice to the full group. Each group does this in turn. This activity can be used to make a list of issues or questions that might need further study and discussion.



Describing and Labelling

Divide the group into pairs and invite each pair to choose one photo and to then describe, in their own words, what is happening in the photo. Ask them to choose some keywords which best describe the photo (e.g. happy, sad, busy, dirty, relaxed, hard-working, etc.). Each pair should then share their description and key words with the whole group. A list of group keywords can then be compiled and discussed. *Are there words in common? Are the words largely positive or negative or a mixture of both? Is there agreement or disagreement as to what might be happening in the photos?*

Alternatively, ask each pair or group to display their photo on a piece of poster paper on a wall. They could write keywords describing the photo on stickers which can then be added to the poster. In this way, the entire set of photos can be displayed and described. Ask the whole group to look at all the posters and then share agreements or disagreements on the words chosen to describe particular pictures.





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Again, each group can share their choices and the reasoning behind it with the larger group, and similarities or differences between groups can then be explored.

Questioning

Give each group or pair a photograph. They should mount this on a larger piece of poster paper so that they can write around the edges of the photo. If this is not possible, the questions can be written on a separate piece of paper. Invite them to write as many questions as they can about the photo.

Questions can be directly relevant to the photo or to issues raised by the photo.

Encourage the group to ask questions that raise broader issues and challenges. The questioning process around each photo can then be displayed and shared with the larger group.

A group list of the most challenging and interesting questions could then form the basis for further study and research.

Storytelling

Each group or pair can be invited to choose a photo and to then describe what might be happening through a story - they should include what happened before the photo was taken and what might happen afterwards.

Identifying and Discussing Issues

Once the group is familiar with the pictures and their content, it is easier to proceed to identifying and discussing the issues they raise. The activities below will help assist this process. Choose activities that best suit your group.

Ranking Photographs

Display the photographs so that all can see them - make sure the number on each photo is clearly visible. Invite each small group to rank their choice of four photos (by number) in a diamond pattern. Their ranking could be on the basis of:

- those they like most/least
- the images that surprise them most/least
- which situation is most/least fair?

What Do You Feel?

Make a selection of photographs that, in your opinion, raise important or challenging questions. Display the photos.

Working in small groups, individuals can explain to each other which photos they chose and why.

What are the key questions they give rise to?

Are the issues chosen by different people the same? Different? Each small group can then present the most important questions they identified to the whole group.

What you see depends on what you're looking for.

Author unknown





Using Photos continued

Other Activities Using Photos

Questions on back of pictures

Print the photos with the questions on the back. Use these questions as a starting point for discussion.

Adjectives

Display the photos and ask the students in groups to brainstorm as many adjectives as they can about the pictures. Both 'negative' and 'positive' adjectives should be included. Share with class and write them on the blackboard. Discuss the adjectives chosen. It is important that the students begin to realise that first impressions are not necessarily right. Some questions to help this could be:

- ◆ Was there a tendency to use the same words or different words for a photograph?
- ◆ Did some photographs only have negative words?
- ◆ Does anyone disagree with the labels given?

Reading a Photograph

Students try to 'read' a photograph, looking carefully at the details. Write a list of questions you have about the photo. The aim is to see that a photo is not a mere illustration. It can be a source of information in its own right and a stimulus to inquiry.

Four Questions

1. Naming the issue—What's going on which is good/bad for the people?
2. Reflect on the background—What is causing or alleviating the problem?
3. What action has or can be taken—both to relieve any problems in the short term and to tackle the causes in the long term?
4. Reflect on values—What is a 'good' life, a 'good' society or 'good' development?

Captions

This activity is useful in bringing out different perceptions of a picture. Ask pairs to write a caption for the same photograph. Write on a strip of paper and display under the photograph. Did people see different things in the same picture? Which caption and picture match best? What do you think the person who wrote this caption was thinking?

Labels

Imagine someone else is writing labels for each of the photographs, for instance, parents or teachers. Would they be different to what the students would write? What labels would the people in the photographs themselves be likely to choose?

Speech Bubbles

Photocopy photos. In pairs students write on paper what they think the people are saying in the photo. Cut out in shape of speech bubble and glue on the photo in relevant position. Ask why they decided to choose that caption.

Skits

Use the photos as inspiration for developing a skit about food issues in developing countries.

