

# Images of the Global South

Guidelines for primary educators for working  
with photographs from around the world



NIGERIA Nembe Creek  
Eight-year old Balazy gets his own back on the photographer by taking her picture himself.  
Photograph by Betty Press/Panos Pictures

Produced by Compass – Development Education in the Primary School.  
Compass is a project of Comhlámh ([www.comhlamh.org](http://www.comhlamh.org))



Funded by Irish Aid



**Irish Aid**

Department of Foreign Affairs  
An Roinn Gnóthai Eachtracha

## When selecting a range of images of the developing world for classroom use, for each photograph consider the following:

### Is the image **CLEAR**?

Does the image convey a message that can be clearly understood by the child? Is the photograph of sufficient quality and clarity?

### ... **DIGNIFIED**?

Are the subjects of the image presented in a manner in which they would wish themselves to be portrayed? Are vulnerable people depicted sensitively?

### ... **AUTHENTIC**?

Is the photograph authentic or do you think it has been cropped or edited in a way which distorts the actual facts?

### ... **BALANCED**?

Do the images used present a balance of ethnicities and role models? Do they show the diverse realities of everyday life and challenge prevailing expectations?

## Images of the Global South

This leaflet is designed as a guide for primary school educators who wish to enrich the global dimension of their work with children.

Photographs are one of the most direct and accessible means of introducing the wider world into the classroom. However images can frequently be contentious and complex. In this leaflet you will find specific criteria on how to go about choosing images of the South, suggestions for developing photo-literacy in the classroom, ideas for incorporating image work across the curriculum, and resources and contacts for further reference. We hope you find this resource useful and empowering.

### What is photo-literacy?

Photo-literacy refers to our ability to 'read' or interpret photographs, using clues and information provided by the photographic image itself and our own knowledge about how images are created. Basic photo-literacy skills include the ability to interpret the actual image as well as the process of its creation. So, the photo-literate viewer will 'read' the contents of the photo, considering factors such as point-of-view, perspective, distance, framing, cropping, etc.

### Why is photo-literacy important for children?

In today's digital world children are more exposed to images than ever before. Many of them will even be taking, uploading and digitally manipulating their own photographs with ease. It is likely that they are already extremely photo-literate.

Educators can capitalise on children's interest in images by exploring photographs using enquiry and discussion techniques. Exploring images is a key methodology used in global education. When exploring global issues it is not usually possible to consult the subjects featured in many of the images we use, so it is important for us to encourage a questioning approach, engaging pupils in a critical thinking process about where and how an image originates and what its purpose might be, etc. In this way we can encourage the development of discerning minds and independent thinkers ... and ultimately global citizens!

### How can I develop photo-literacy amongst the children in my classroom?

The best way for children to become adept at interpreting photographs is by giving them lots of opportunities to respond to images.

A collection of photographs of home, school and the local community can provide the ideal starting point for developing the photo-literacy skills of pupils. Working with familiar scenes, children can undertake creative activities such as captioning, cropping, extending-the-frame, and story-boarding (for methodologies see [www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/teachers/photopps](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/teachers/photopps) or references on the back of this leaflet). These exercises can help children to recognise how the viewer relies on his/her own values and experiences when interpreting photographic evidence.

Teachers can encourage pupils to consider the context of photographs, using such questions as: 'Who do you think took this photo? Why? How did the subject feel? Did s/he want to be in the photo? Would you like to be in the photo? Why? Why not? Could you think of another way of taking this photograph?'

As well as examining images, children can develop further insights through using a camera themselves in the classroom and analysing the process: 'Whose point of view is represented?' 'What does framing do to an image? What do you think is outside the frame?'

Explore digital manipulation with them: 'Does a photo always tell the truth?'

Try looking at an image or series of images while listening to different sounds or music: 'Does this change your perception of the image? How? Why?' etc.

Research shows that children 'read' images differently to adults. For instance, children tend to focus on familiar aspects of an image: they may add details that aren't there at all and ignore unfamiliar elements; young children attach importance to detail, foreground and background, while older children take in the overall picture. (adapted from Margaret Mackintosh, Learning from Photographs', in Primary Sources: Research findings in Primary Geography, The Geographical Association, 1998).

## Key considerations

**Context:** What information do the children in your class already have about the issue you are tackling? What kind of images/ideas will they already have formed about the subject in question? Aim to challenge their perceptions (e.g. if talking about Kenya, begin by showing them some photos of business life in Nairobi city). Avoid stereotypical, sensational or tokenistic depictions of people, situations and places (e.g. overuse of Masai warriors).

**Complexity:** Any image can be interpreted in a multiplicity of ways, depending on the experiences and perceptions of the viewer. Remember that frequently images can puzzle and raise more questions than answers. Consider the theory of 'perspective consciousness when discussing photos with children.

**Concern:** The aim of exposing children to images should never be to shock or to arouse pity, but rather to encourage empathy, interest, understanding - and where appropriate - action.

**Caption:** Has the image been correctly captioned? Is the label clear and unambiguous? Does the information provide accurate information about the content of the image? Do the subjects appear to have been consulted about how they would like to be described or if they wish to be named? For reasons of safety it is recommended that children are not named. Adults depicted should be named or not depending on their wishes.

**Perspective consciousness:** The awareness that our own perspective, our framework for thought and perception is only one of many which are possible. Our perspective may not be universally shared, and the potential for misunderstanding and conflict arises when we try to use our own point of view to interpret or evaluate the ways of life, behaviour or beliefs of others. Our perspective is shaped by, among other things, our age, class, ethnic group, gender, where we live, culture, beliefs etc. Developing sensitivity to other perspectives benefits children by helping them challenge ways of thinking and behaving which they may take for granted as 'normal'. It stimulates their imagination, promotes more creative thinking, encourages new ways of looking at problems and heightens respect for differences. (Adapted from Learning Together – Global Education 4-7 by Susan Fountain)

### Using images of the South

Once they have used familiar scenes to build up photo-literacy and perspective-consciousness amongst their pupils, teachers should feel more confident about moving on to the more challenging area of photographs of distant places and people.

Most primary school textbooks present an extremely small number of images of the developing world, and the few images that are included emphasise physical geography rather than people. Furthermore many of these images tend to be stereotypical and predominantly negative. In classrooms where teachers rely heavily on textbooks for curriculum delivery, pupils will see few, if any, photographic images of people living in the South. This points to the need for teachers to draw on a variety of sources for photographic images and to ensure that the selection is as representative as possible.

### Where does photo-literacy fit into the Primary Curriculum?

The ability to assess and analyse images is an element of Media education, which – alongside Developing citizenship – is a key Strand unit within the

SPHE Primary Curriculum strand Myself and the wider world. The SPHE teacher guidelines suggest giving children opportunities to:

- explore some of the techniques used in the media
- explore how prejudice and partiality can distort information
- look at the media in a critical way by asking questions, exploring perspectives, and examining bias
- become discerning about the messages they receive, etc.

Photo-literacy is integral to the development of all of these skills, and a key component of media literacy.

The Curriculum also outlines the benefits of exploring visual images with children as they learn to:

- Explore bias
- Question the content of an image
- Explore different points of view
- Compare their own experience with reality
- Explore attitudes and understanding of certain concepts
- Examine stereotyping and the similarities and differences between people

These skills are given particular empha-

sis through the exploration of images of the developing world.

### Can I integrate photography into other areas of the Curriculum?

The skills of discussing images of distant lands and people, as well as creating images of local situations, can be used to enrich many Curricular areas in an integrated or thematic way. (With digital photography this is easy and economical). Here are a few ideas:

**English:** describing content and construction and listening to others' opinions, recalling content; putting words and images together to create photo-stories

**Maths:** recording pictorially, comparing size and shape, sequencing, etc

**History:** understanding image construction, questioning and interpreting purpose

**Science:** identifying, recording, observing, predicting, comparing, exploring properties of light, making a pinhole camera etc.

**Drama:** making and recording still pictures, role-play, basic film-making etc.

See your Curriculum or the titles listed on the back of this flyer for ideas for other curricular areas.

## Reference points

### Resources for classroom use

- **Photo Opportunities 2000**, Oxfam (pack includes photos showing people worldwide engaged in everyday tasks; poster, map and teachers' booklet with practical advice for using images in the classroom).
- **Photo Opportunities Science and Photo Opportunities Maths**, Oxfam (bring a global dimension to Science and Maths with these activity packs containing photos of children around the world)
- **Fat Felts and Sugar Paper, activities for speaking and listening about issues**, TIDE (includes comprehensive section on using photographs as a resource, including activities for exploring perceptions, challenging bias etc.)
- **Picture My World**, Trentham books. (This practical book covers various curriculum areas: "How do I see?" (Art); "Who am I?" (Religious Education); "Where do I live?" (Geography); "How do I tell it?" (English); "How do I understand the world?" (Science). It contains a range of activities and images, many of which have been taken by children in the classroom, and explores basic photographic techniques and visual literacy).
- **Framing the Child, Photography in the Classroom**. Watershed Education Department and Trentham Books ( ideas for integrating photography into classroom work generally).
- See also the **DICE project's 10 Golden Rules for using images in the primary classroom** on [www.diceproject.org](http://www.diceproject.org) and the **Code of Conduct on Images and Messages** on [www.dochas.ie](http://www.dochas.ie)

For a comprehensive list of titles of activity packs, posters and storybooks which include a diverse selection of images of the Global South, please see Irish Aid's Guide to Development Education Resources in Ireland 2006-2008 (hyperlinked version available on [www.irishaid.gov.ie](http://www.irishaid.gov.ie)).

### Relevant websites

- [www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/teachers/photopps](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/teachers/photopps) (complete toolkit for choosing/using photos in the classroom. The website complements the Oxfam photo packs above).
- [www.savethechildren.org.uk/eyetoeye/english/abouttheproject/teaching.htm](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/eyetoeye/english/abouttheproject/teaching.htm) (the Eye to Eye project site looks at the Palestinian issue with children - using photos. Save the Children have also produced excellent guidelines for using and choosing images for the classroom - see the site).
- <http://www.globaleducation.edna.edu.au/globaled/go/pid/2836> (AusAid's Global Education website has a dedicated 'photo literacy' page with creative ideas on introducing visual literacy into the classroom).
- [www.photovoices.org](http://www.photovoices.org) (a capacity building project which encourages marginalised children, many of them from

developing countries to tell their stories through their own photos.

- [www.photoshare.org](http://www.photoshare.org) (non-profit database which allows individuals and organisations to download photos for educational use).

Other image banks specialising in images of the South include: [www.kijivision.org](http://www.kijivision.org) [www.majorityworld.com](http://www.majorityworld.com) [www.panospictures.com](http://www.panospictures.com) and [www.exileimages.co.uk](http://www.exileimages.co.uk) (Please note that these sites can contain potentially disturbing images so children should not be allowed to browse them unsupervised. However the fully searchable databases provide an invaluable source of images/information for introducing complex global issues into the classroom).

Some general databases which offer free or cheap downloadable images include: [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com) [www.istockphoto.com](http://www.istockphoto.com) and [www.freefoto.com](http://www.freefoto.com)

### Useful contacts

Compass – Development Education in the Primary School, Comhlámh, 10 Upr Camden St, Dublin 2. Tel: 01 478 3490 [www.comhlahm.org](http://www.comhlahm.org) Email: [lizzie@comhlahm.org](mailto:lizzie@comhlahm.org) or [sarina@comhlahm.org](mailto:sarina@comhlahm.org)

DICE – Development and Intercultural Education, Church of Ireland College of Education, Rathmines, Dublin 6. Tel: 01 4970033 [www.diceproject.org](http://www.diceproject.org) Email: [mfiedler@cice.ie](mailto:mfiedler@cice.ie) or [coneill@cice.ie](mailto:coneill@cice.ie)

Africa Centre, 9C Abbey St Lower, Methodist Church Building, Dublin 1, Ireland. Tel: 01 865 6951. [www.africacentre.ie](http://www.africacentre.ie) Email: [education@africacentre.ie](mailto:education@africacentre.ie)

Waterford One World Centre, 18 Parnell St, Waterford. Tel: 051 873064. [www.waterfordoneworldcentre.com](http://www.waterfordoneworldcentre.com) Email: [info@waterfordoneworldcentre.com](mailto:info@waterfordoneworldcentre.com)

KADE (Kerry Action for Development Education), 11 Denny St., Tralee, Co. Kerry. Tel: 066 7181358. [www.kade.ie](http://www.kade.ie) Email: [kade@eircom.net](mailto:kade@eircom.net)

Galway One World Centre, Bridge Mills, Dominick St., Galway. Tel: 091 530590 [www.galwayowc.org](http://www.galwayowc.org) Email: [education@galwayowc.org](mailto:education@galwayowc.org)

Centre for Global Education, 9 University St., Belfast, BT7 1FY. Tel: 028 90 24189 [www.centreforglobaleducation.com](http://www.centreforglobaleducation.com) Email: [info@centreforglobaleducation.com](mailto:info@centreforglobaleducation.com)