

# Every Picture Tells a Story

*Sometimes we see something which looks very simple. But look again from another point of view, and you may see something different.*

## Issues addressed

- Perceptions are biased and depend on our previous experience, expectations, culture etc.
- Decisions are often made on the basis of limited information

## Aims

- To show how our images of other people influence our interpretation of their behaviour.
- To be aware of how we make up the gaps in our knowledge.
- To be aware of the influence and power that our images have upon other people.

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Group size:** Any size

## Preparation

- Select a picture which relates to the theme of you session or the campaign.
- Cut the picture into two pieces in such a way that separately each half 'tells a story', but which when put together give you a 'different story'.
- Stick the two halves on separate sheets of paper.
- Make enough copies for one per participant.
- Paper and pencils for each participant

## Instructions

1. Tell the group that you are going to give each of them a picture and that, individually, they must write down what they think the picture is about, who the characters are, what is happening, where the action is taking place, etc.
2. Give each participant a copy of the first half of the picture and 5 minutes to think and write their story.
3. Now ask the participants to share what they wrote. If the group is big, this can be done in small groups of 6 to 8 people.
4. Now give out the second half of the picture and ask people to review their impressions of what they have seen.

## Debriefing and evaluation

The discussion should provide an analysis about the ways in which we organise and review information. The following questions will help:

- What did you think the picture was about?
- Who were the people in the picture?
- Where were they?



- What were they doing?
- Why were they there?
- Why did you imagine certain things (rather than others)?
- Did the picture have a different meaning to different members of the group?
- Did what you think changed when you saw the whole picture?

In real life, when something happens or we see only a small part of the “picture”, we nonetheless try to make sense of it.

- What happens if you then look at it again in a wider context and get a different point of view?
- Do you change your mind or do you stick to your original position?
- Why is it hard to be honest about changing our minds?

### **Tips for the facilitator**

Try to find pictures or drawings that are appropriate to the group and relevant to their lives or which are about an issue which you want to explore.

### **Suggestions for follow up**

Encourage everyone to pledge to try to be more aware and critical of the things they hear people say, what they read or of pictures they see, especially pictures of the news and in advertising. Set time aside at the next session for people to say what surprises they had and what they've learned.

This activity links well with ‘What do you see?’ (page 176) which is about looking at pictures from the papers and pretending you are the editor writing the captions.