

# UNICEF Activity File

## Media Literacy for Development & Children's Rights

### Introduction

#### Media Literacy for Development & Children's Rights

- **Activity 1: Looking Through the Lenses**
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# Media Literacy for Development & Children's Rights

Looking Through  
the Lenses

Whose Lenses?

Adjusting the Focus

## Introduction

### OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES:

#### Activity One: Looking Through the Lenses

1. Optical Illusion
2. True or False?
3. From Your Point of View

#### Activity Two: Whose Lenses? How Mass Media Portray Global Development

1. Making the News
2. Deconstructing the News

3. Views on the News

4. Now It's Your Turn

#### Activity Three: Adjusting the Focus

1. Point Of View: Children in the  
Media
2. Censorship Case Studies: Who  
Decides What We See?

#### Other Resources

### DESCRIPTION:

UNICEF's small orange Halloween collection box is an icon of development assistance in Canada. The money collected in the distinctive box supports UNICEF-assisted programs in over 150 developing countries, promoting the survival, development and protection of the most marginalized children. But what image do we have of those who we reach through donations? How do we develop those perceptions? This activity file looks at how the media is instrumental in how we formulate our images and perceptions of people and places with which we lack first-hand experience -- particularly, developing countries. We also examine what the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child says about children's rights as they relate to the media. With a focus on development issues and children's rights, the activities examine the techniques, values, ownership and representation involved in media production and encourage students to develop an informed, critical understanding of mass media.

## **WHY TEACH ABOUT MEDIA LITERACY?**

### **DEFINITIONS FOR USE IN THIS ACTIVITY**

#### **TEACHING/LEARNING:**

This activity file is a collection of lesson plans that can be used collectively or in parts, connected to the regular curriculum, to help enable students in intermediate/senior grades to:

- foster critical use of mass media and media content
- practice skills to detect bias and stereotypes and think critically about images in the media
- demonstrate sensitivity to a diversity of viewpoints
- examine how images and perceptions of developing countries are formed
- explore media issues affecting the rights of children and youth, and global development

It is suggested that students maintain journals for the activities in this file.

#### **CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS:**

See provincial curriculum connections for media literacy at [www.media-awareness.ca](http://www.media-awareness.ca).

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## Activity 1: Looking Through the Lenses

### 1. OPTICAL ILLUSION

This activity introduces the concepts of how perceptions can be distorted, and how stereotypes work.



#### Resources

#### RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

- handout: [Optical Illusion](#)



#### Procedure

#### PROCEDURE

**Step One:** Project an acetate copy of the handout, Optical Illusion, on overhead (or distribute copies to student pairs). Ask students if they think the stairs are on the floor, or on the ceiling. Explain that both perceptions are valid, but it is likely that most students saw the stairs as on the floor because we would expect them to be there.

**Step Two:** Explain that just as people learn how to read, they learn how to see -- how to make sense out of rays of light hitting the eyes. The brain learns "rules" of seeing; for example, the farther things are from you, the smaller they appear. But when an object or drawing breaks the rules, or when it could be interpreted different ways, your brain tends to apply the "rules" and may give you wrong information or one perception of the information that makes most sense.

**Step Three:** Explain that stereotyping works the same way: we create "rules" for how we think individuals are or should be (often based on how we identify them with a group defined by race, gender, class, and so on -- so that "all girls like pink" or "all Canadians live in igloos"). But thinking this way, we get an incorrect or partial view of the

world.



## Handouts

### HANDOUTS

- [Optical Illusion](#)

## 2. True or False?

This activity explores how people can form inaccurate perceptions of the world around them, particularly if they rely entirely on the mass media for information.



## Resources

### RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

- handout: [True or False?](#)
- 2 large sheets of blank paper, marker
- masking tape



## Procedure

### PROCEDURE

**Step One:** Look at a world map and locate some affluent countries, then locate what you think are developing countries (where a large proportion of the population lacks access to essential basic services, economic security and full participation in civil society). How do you think developing countries are different from Canada? How do you think children's daily lives, at home, school and work, are different from yours? How are they similar?

**Step Two:** Post a sign that reads "TRUE" on one side of the classroom and a sign that reads "FALSE" on the other side. Clear the floor in the middle of the room and paste a line down the middle (to demarcate the "TRUE" side from the "FALSE" side) with masking tape. Invite students to stand in this space. Explain that you will be reading a series of statements (from the handout): after each statement, students should move to the side of the line (TRUE or FALSE) in accordance with how they view the statement. Read the first statement, and give students a few moments to consider it and then move to a side. When the students have chosen a side (or are indeterminately standing in the middle of the room), give the correct answer. Engage in a brief discussion about where the

inaccurate guesses might have originated. Repeat the process for as many of the statements as you wish.

**Step Three:** Discuss as a group:

Generally, how accurate were your guesses? Why do you think this is? How have your media experiences (watching television and movies, reading the newspaper) influenced your responses?



## Handouts

### HANDOUTS

- True or False?

## 3. From Your Point of View

This activity looks at how personal experience affects the way people perceive the world, and the effects of perceptions on self image and images of others.



## Procedure

### PROCEDURE

**Step One:** Ask students to name some of the problems facing Canada (or their local area). List these on the chalkboard. Ask everyone to imagine they are outsiders who know only this information (about Canada or the local area). What would they think of the place? List ideas. Ask students how they would feel if the unpleasant aspects listed were the only information others had about their area. Would it matter? Why? Why is the students' view different? What would students want others to know?

**Step Two:** List ideas students associate with the term "developing world" or "Third World". Discuss these in light of Step One. Where do these ideas come from? What is missing from students perceptions? Why? How might the perceptions differ if your class had more/fewer students who have lived in a developing country? How do students think people from developing countries would feel about others' perceptions of their region? To what extent do students think that the most common impressions of developing countries are the exception and not the norm? What roles do family, personality, experience, beliefs and the media play in how we see the world? What other "filters" or "lenses" affect how we see the world?

**Step Three:** In what ways might people from developing

countries come into contact with outsiders' views of them (e.g., films, international news shows produced in the West, advertisements, Internet, aid agencies)? How might they feel about how they are portrayed? Ask students to describe orally or in journals any similar experiences where they or their group, or any aspect of their identity, has been viewed in terms of a stereotype. What can we do to see through stereotypes? What can we do to discourage stereotypes?



## **EXTENSION**

Log on to [www.onlinenewspapers.com](http://www.onlinenewspapers.com). This site will provide the students with links to hundreds of newspapers from around the world. Ask them, in groups of two or three, to find an article on a current event in a newspaper from a more developed country and another article on the same event from a less developed country, and compare them (with written analysis in their journals).

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## Activity 2: Whose Lenses? How Mass Media Portray Global Development

### 1. Making the News

This activity examines bias in the newspaper by re-enacting how a reporter collects information: who gets interviewed, what perspective is dominant, what perspectives are left out.



#### Resources

#### RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

- in extension: a variety of newspapers and magazines



#### Procedure

#### PROCEDURE

**Step One:** Ask two students to put on a skit, preferably without the rest of the class knowing. Ask them to act out a conflict where one student is angry with the other for not returning his/her textbook. Ask the students to be loud so that the rest of the class overhear the conversation. After the argument has gone on long enough so that all the class have heard, ask the students putting on the skit to sit down.

**Step Two:** Tell the students that they have just witnessed a conflict and they are going to write a news report about what happened. Divide the class into four groups. The first group will interview only one of the students from the skit, the second will interview only the other, the third group will interview both students (separately), and the last group will interview both students and two witnesses.

**Step Three:** After they have finished the interviews, ask each group to write an article reporting on the conflict.

**Step Four:** Ask someone from each group to read their

article to the rest of the class.

**Step Five:** Discuss the articles with the students. Which one best explained what happened? Why? Which gave the least information? Why? Which type(s) of coverage may be most prone to promoting bias and misperceptions? Which type(s) of coverage appears in the news? Can you think of an incident you saw on the news recently that showed bias? What point(s) of view was missing?



## EXTENSION

Ask the students to find examples of biased reporting in magazines, newspapers or on the news and then answer the following questions: Why is it biased? What points of view are missing? What type of information do you think the missing points of view would give?

## 2. Deconstructing the News

This activity looks at how bias can be represented in the newspaper.



## RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

- two copies of the same day's newspaper, enough for each student or group
- a pair of scissors for each student or group



## PROCEDURE

**Step One:** As a class, brainstorm and list sources of news. Survey the class to find out where most people get their news. Why is this the case? What news sources do they believe are the most reliable? Which are the least? Where does the media get their information? Do the students believe that the media has an agenda when reporting the news? Lead the students in a discussion on bias in the media.

**Step Two:** Divide the students into groups so that each group has one section of that day's paper. Each group will need two copies of their section so they can clip the articles on both sides of the page. Ask the students to cut out each article and advertisement in their section of the

paper, and divide the articles and advertisements into groups: national news, developing countries, young people in the news, advertisements, entertainment, and other.

**Step Three:** When all the groups are finished separating the articles and advertisements in their paper, share observations. What do you notice about the categories? Is there more local news than international news? What percentage of the paper is advertisements? How are young people portrayed - or not? How are development issues portrayed - or not? How many articles talk about issues that directly concern and are about young people? What kind of news is lacking that the students would like to know about? Why do you think it is not in the paper?



### EXTENSION

Do the same activity with different newspapers (local v. national, etc.). Newspapers from various countries can be accessed at [www.onlinenewspapers.com](http://www.onlinenewspapers.com). Students can compare the different types of articles and advertisements with written analysis in their journals.

## 3. Views on the News

This activity explores one of the most influential image mediums - the television news. The purpose of the activity is to identify the forces that control the decisions affecting those who present the TV news; particularly, to understand the role of the news media in the construction of images of developing countries.



### RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

- single copy of [The View from Here](#)
- [discussion questions and role cards](#) for PAT and SAM (equal number of both cards - enough for one per student)
- 2 large sheets of paper
- markers



## PROCEDURE

**Step One:** Where do you most often see pictures of people in developing countries? What do these images usually show? Read the quote by the TV Journalist (The View From Here). Discuss students' responses to the reporting of humanitarian disasters in developing countries. Why do these kinds of images interest the editors? Do you think they generate concern among the public? What are the dangers and problems of this kind of reporting? Do you think that there are other ways of reporting on developing countries which would interest the public and promote more positive images and perceptions? How could you make your suggestions known to decision-makers in the media? Students could select a suggestion, implement it, and keep a record in their journals.

**Step Two:** Post the Discussion Questions for SAM on one side of the classroom and the Discussion Questions for PAT on the other. Divide students into two equal-sized groups. Give each student in one group a SAM card and each student in the other group a PAT card. Direct each group to the questions posted on the wall for their character.

**Step Three:** With their group, students review their cards and discuss the questions. Explain to the PAT group that Pat should try to solve the problems and not just block Sam's ideas -- they don't want to lose Sam to another network.

**Step Four:** Each Sam finds a Pat to meet with. Explain that they are going to listen to each other's point of view and try to find a solution that they will both be content with. Allow about 15-20 minutes for the pairs to negotiate a solution.

**Step Five:** As a class, discuss:

1. On what issue was there most disagreement?
2. Which of Sam's arguments did Pat find most difficult to address?
3. Which of Pat's arguments did Sam find most difficult to address?

4. What could both Sam and Pat agree on? Did students have ideas not mentioned in the role cards?
5. How should Pat explain the outcome of the meeting to the Editor-in-Chief?
6. What things should viewers of TV news think about as they watch the news?
7. What other sources of news are available, and how do they compare to TV news presentations?
8. Every day, about 30 000 children in developing countries die, largely from preventable diseases and malnutrition. Why do you think we don't see that reported on the daily news?



## EXTENSION

Rewrite the role cards so that they relate to a specific country or situation with which the group has some familiarity, to give the activity a degree of currency and topicality.

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## 4. Now It's Your Turn

This activity examines the factors that affect the choice of images in the media, and how to evaluate the effects that images have on an audience.



## RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

- handout: [Choosing and Editing Photos](#)
- large sheets of blank paper
- media materials: variety of newspapers and magazines, travel catalogues, development/relief agency flyers



## Procedure

### PROCEDURE

**Step One:** Cut and photocopy the handout, Choosing and Editing Photos. Divide the class into small groups. Give a photo section (not the full picture or caption) to each small group of students, and have them paste their photo in the middle of a blank sheet of paper. Invite the groups to imagine what's going on in their photo, and invent a context that gives the picture meaning. Students can:

- write a caption, monologue or article about what is happening
- draw arrows to parts of the photo with written questions and interpretations about what is happening around the cropped image
- draw in the missing parts around the photo.

**Step Two:** As a class, examine the full picture. Discuss how closely the groups' interpretations matched the meaning of the whole photo. What caused the misinterpretations? Why might editors crop and otherwise alter the photos they use with news stories? What is the effect of this on our images and perceptions?

**Step Three:** Spread the media materials around the classroom. In their small groups, students can peruse newspapers and magazines for photographic images of developing countries. The world news and travel sections are most likely to contain photos. With their groups, students discuss and record in their journals:

1. How well does the photo grab your attention?
2. How did the photo affect you? When you first looked at the photo what did you think was going on?
3. What is the purpose and relevance of the photo in relation to the story?
4. What would you think was going on if you only looked at the photo, but did not read the article? Is the photo an accurate reflection of what is going on?
5. What impression does the photo give of the country and its people? Is it realistic? For whom, when?

6. Are the people in the photo like you?
7. What important information might be missing?
8. What might be happening outside the frame of the photo, in the surrounding area?
9. What questions do you have that are unanswered about what is being depicted?

**Step Four:** Groups decide whether they will represent a travel company or a development/relief agency, and design a poster, flyer or ad page for a campaign using one or more of the photos, creating text to go with it. They might employ photo-altering techniques such as cropping, rotation, shading,.. After each group presents its piece to the class (and each student keeps a copy of the piece in their journals), discuss:

1. Why did you choose that photo? Why did you reject other photos?
2. What image does the photo convey about developing countries? Is the rich diversity of life represented?
3. How did your text represent or misrepresent the photo?
4. What techniques did you use to alter the photo? How did this change the image represented by the photo?
5. What misperceptions about life in developing countries might be perpetuated if people had only these sources of information?
6. How can people gain a balanced view of life in developing countries?

# Media Literacy for Development & Children's Rights

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Adjusting the Focus

## Activity 3: Adjusting the Focus

### 1. Point of View: Children in the Media

This activity deals with images and perceptions of youth in the media.



### Resources

#### RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

- newspaper photos and articles used in Activity Two
- a copy of the list, Children's Rights and the Media, for each student (or a copies of the full text of the Convention on the Rights of the Child at [www.unicef.org/crc/crc.htm](http://www.unicef.org/crc/crc.htm)).



### Procedure

#### PROCEDURE

**Step One:** Ask the students, working in small groups, to select newspaper photos and articles that involve children, and then sort these into three categories: POSITIVE images of children, NEGATIVE images of children, and NEUTRAL images of children. They can discuss and record in their journals:

1. How many items concerned children relative to other items?
2. Compare the number of positive, negative and neutral images of children.
3. Describe how children are portrayed in the news: are they victims? are they aggressors? are they portrayed as contributing members of society? are they given voice (e.g., quoted or consulted by the reporter)? are they reporters?
4. What stereotypes or bias about children/youth seem to be presented in the news?

5. How much of the content is information to help youth improve their health and well-being?

6. Do you feel that your lifestyle and point of view are reflected in the media? If yes, when and where? If not, what is missing?

**Step Two:** If the full text of the Convention is used, ask students in pairs to cut out the articles that have some connection to media issues (particularly the issues raised in Step One). Alternatively, give each pair one of the rights in the list, *Children's Rights and the Media*. Ask each pair to give an example of how their right can be positively affected by the media, and an example of how it can be negatively affected by the media. Students can paste examples from print media in their journals, or give written examples. Share an example from each right with the class.

**Step Three:** In pairs again, students choose an article of the Convention, and create and implement an action that promotes that right in the media. For example, for article 12 (children's opinion), students could write a letter to the editor of a news program, paper or magazine urging youth to be interviewed or contracted to report on issues that concern them. For article 24 (health and health care), students could analyze a teen-magazine for images and messages about health, and create a cover (and articles) for an alternative magazine that positively promotes health.

## 2. Censorship Case Studies: Who Decides What We See?

In this activity, students review two case studies to explore children's rights issues related to mass media and censorship.



### RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

- a copy of the list, *Children's Rights and the Media*, for each student (or a copies of the full text of the Convention on the Rights of the Child at [www.unicef.org/crc/crc.htm](http://www.unicef.org/crc/crc.htm)).
- a copy of ONE of the Censorship Case Studies for each pair of students: half the pairs should get Case Study #1 and half Case Study #2.



## PROCEDURE

**Step One:** Initiate a class discussion about censorship. How do the students define censorship? What is its purpose? What do you feel needs to be censored and why? Who should decide what should be censored? Should young people be consulted and involved in the censorship process?

**Step Two:** Stage a class debate on this statement: "Children's rights are protected (or harmed) by censorship," or on the statement, "Media Literacy/Education is better than Censorship (or Censorship is Better than Media Literacy) to protect children's well-being." Allow the two sides to prepare for the debate by giving them copies of Children's Rights and the Media - or the full text of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Students should particularly consider the potential impacts (positive or negative) of censorship on the rights to non-discrimination (article 2), information (article 17), participation (articles 12, 13, 14), health (article 24), culture (article 30) and exploitation (article 34).

**Step Three:** Give a copy of one Censorship Case Study and the list, Children's Rights and the Media, to each pair of students. Ask each pair to:

1. Read their case study.
2. Discuss if and how censorship is occurring, who is doing the censoring and why.
2. Decide which children's rights the censorship will affect, positively or negatively: put a "+" beside the rights on the list that could be positively affected and a "-" beside the rights that could be negatively affected.
3. Write in their journals a proposed resolution to the controversy that will best protect all the rights. Consider: What would you do in this situation? Who might help? How could the young person work to protect their rights? What resolutions might consider the interests of all parties - parents, teachers, students?

**Step Four:** Ask each Case Study #1 pair to join with a Case Study #2 pair, and discuss their cases and resolutions. Invite the groups to share their observations

with the whole class.

## Activity 3: Adjusting the Focus

### CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND THE MEDIA

#### ARTICLE 1: Definition of a child

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*A child is recognized as a person under 18, unless national laws recognize the age of majority earlier.*

For the purposes of the present Convention, a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

#### ARTICLE 2: Non-discrimination

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*All rights apply to all children without exception. It is the State's obligation to protect children from any form of discrimination and to take positive action to promote their rights.*

1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.

#### ARTICLE 6: Survival and development

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*Every child has the right to protection for survival.*

1. States Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life.
2. States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.

#### ARTICLE 12: The child's opinion

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*The child has the right to express his or her opinion freely and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting the child.*

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

## **ARTICLE 13: Freedom of expression**

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*The child has the right to express his or her views, obtain information, make ideas or information known, regardless of frontiers.*

1. The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

2. The exercise of this right may be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:

(a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others; or

(b) For the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals.

## **ARTICLE 14: Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion**

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*The State shall respect the child's right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, subject to appropriate parental guidance.*

1. States Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

2. States Parties shall respect the rights and duties of the parents and, when applicable, legal guardians, to provide direction to the child in the exercise of his or her right in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child.

3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

## **ARTICLE 17: Access to appropriate information**

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*The State shall ensure the accessibility to children of information and material from a diversity of sources, and it shall encourage the mass media to disseminate information which is of social and cultural benefit to the child, and take steps to protect him or her from harmful materials.*

States Parties recognize the important function performed by the mass media and shall ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health. To this end, States Parties shall:

- (a) Encourage the mass media to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child and in accordance with the spirit of article 29;
- (b) Encourage international co-operation in the production, exchange and dissemination of such information and material from a diversity of cultural, national and international sources;
- (c) Encourage the production and dissemination of children's books;
- (d) Encourage the mass media to have particular regard to the linguistic needs of the child who belongs to a minority group or who is indigenous;
- (e) Encourage the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being, bearing in mind the provisions of articles 13 and 18.

## **ARTICLE 24: Health and health care**

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*The child has the right to the highest standard of health and medical care attainable.*

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services.
2. States Parties shall pursue full implementation of this right and, in particular, shall take appropriate measures:
  - (a) To diminish infant and child mortality;
  - (b) To ensure the provision of necessary medical assistance and health care to all children with emphasis on the development of primary health care;
  - (c) To combat disease and malnutrition, including within the framework of primary

health care, through, inter alia, the application of readily available technology and through the provision of adequate nutritious foods and clean drinking-water, taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution;

(d) To ensure appropriate pre-natal and post-natal health care for mothers;

(e) To ensure that all segments of society, in particular parents and children, are informed, have access to education and are supported in the use of basic knowledge of child health and nutrition, the advantages of breastfeeding, hygiene and environmental sanitation and the prevention of accidents;

(f) To develop preventive health care, guidance for parents and family planning education and services.

3. States Parties shall take all effective and appropriate measures with a view to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children.

4. States Parties undertake to promote and encourage international co-operation with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the right recognized in the present article. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

### **ARTICLE 30: Children of minorities or indigenous populations**

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*Children of minority communities and indigenous populations have the right to their own culture, language and religion.*

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practice his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.

### **ARTICLE 34: Sexual exploitation**

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*The State shall protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse.*

States Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, States Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent:

- (a) The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;
- (b) The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices;
- (c) The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.

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[www.unicef.org/crc/crc.htm](http://www.unicef.org/crc/crc.htm)

*For the full text of the Convention of the Rights of the Child*

## Activity 2: Whose Lenses? How Mass Media Portray Global Development

### THE VIEW FROM HERE

"What really hurts me sometimes in doing famine stories is this drive to find a baby that is even skinnier than the last one you've filmed. I was in Mozambique and I found myself at about three in the morning sitting up still awake and on my mind was the fact that I hadn't got a picture that I thought was going to interest my editors. In other words the child I had shot six hours earlier on film wasn't skinny enough and that is a rather sick way to look at it -- but you are forced into that. It's a problem when the only way in which you can get Third World reporting on the air is through disasters. It's like a drug, you need bigger and bigger quotas, bigger and bigger portions of it to interest the public and interest the editors."

-- TV Journalist

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Discussion Questions for Sam

1. What are your suggestions to the news editor, and the reasons for them?
2. What are the possible implications of your idea for:
  - a) appeal to viewers: how quick, clear and exciting is it?
  - b) format: how similar is it to standard news items? How much of a risk is it?
  - c) funding costs
3. What are the advantages of your idea?

### Discussion Questions for Pat

1. What do you know about the idea Sam is going to discuss with you?
2. What are the possible implications of Sam's idea for:
  - a) appeal to viewers: how quick, clear and exciting is it?
  - b) format: how similar is it to standard news items? How much of a risk is it?
  - c) funding costs
3. What are the advantages of the idea? Disadvantages?

## ROLE CARDS

### PAT

You are going to have a meeting with Sam, a respected and talented TV journalist. Sam is worried that many news items give a harmful impression of developing countries because only disasters are reported, and people are always made to look like helpless victims. Sam has suggested a news item on the flood in Mozambique that shows how the people are taking action in the face of this disaster. Sam wants to interview people in

Mozambique so they will speak for themselves about the problems, and would like more air time to show the background issues. You are worried that it might be too long and complicated for a short news item. Viewers respond to what grabs their feelings more quickly than they respond to things they have to think about. You are planning to discuss it with Sam and try to reach an agreement. What will you say?

### SAM

You are going to have a meeting with your editor, Pat. As a TV Journalist, you are worried that many news items give a harmful impression of developing countries because people are made to look like passive victims. But you know that in many places you visit, people are taking responsibility for themselves and dealing with problems in a courageous, effective way which is not reflected in the news. You are going to suggest an item that talks about the action people in Mozambique are taking in response to a disastrous flood. You want to explore the background issues of poverty and environmental destruction that have made the flood a real disaster, and you want to have people speak for themselves about it &ndash; perhaps with subtitles on the footage. You are even considering the idea of having Mozambican journalists create some of the story. You suspect Pat will object because she thinks the more usual approach makes a good story. How will you try to persuade Pat that your ideas will work?

# Activity 2: Whose Lenses? How Mass Media Portray Global Development

## CHOOSING AND EDITING PHOTOS



[Next](#)

## Activity 2: Whose Lenses? How Mass Media Portray Global Development

### CHOOSING AND EDITING PHOTOS

CAPTION: A Guatemalan woman holds her infant daughter, and displays her diploma recognizing her participation in a UNICEF-assisted workshop on social administration.



NEXT

# Activity 2: Whose Lenses? How Mass Media Portray Global Development

## CHOOSING AND EDITING PHOTOS



**NEXT**

## Activity 2: Whose Lenses? How Mass Media Portray Global Development

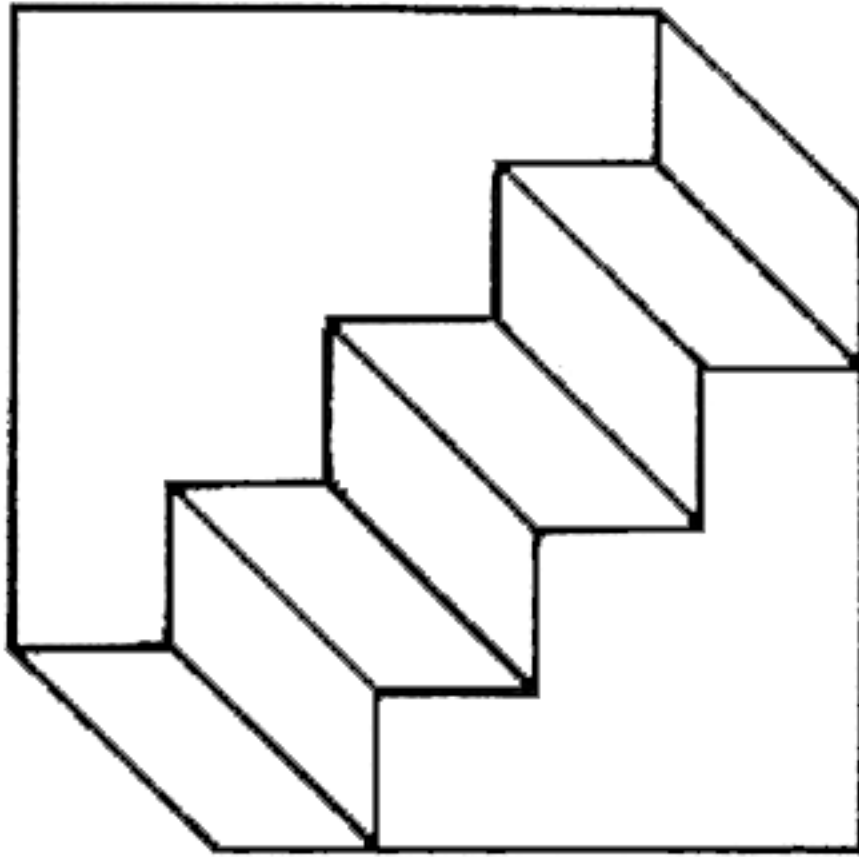
### CHOOSING AND EDITING PHOTOS

Caption: Five-year-old Zeki is measured at a health check-up at a UNICEF-assisted health centre in Iraq.



# Activity 1: Looking Through the Lenses

## OPTICAL ILLUSION



# Activity 1: Looking Through the Lenses

## TRUE OR FALSE?

### 1. The leading cause of child death in developing countries is famine.

FALSE: Diarrhea (dehydration) and immunization-preventable diseases account for over half of all deaths.

### 2. Canada provides about 10 cents per tax dollar as foreign aid.

FALSE: About 2 cents per dollar is contributed to Official Development Assistance.

### 3. 2% of the world's children are starving (visibly malnourished).

TRUE: "Invisible" malnutrition is more widespread, affecting about 40% of children in developing countries.

### 4. 90% of the world's children go to primary school.

TRUE: About 130 million children do not have access to school; two-thirds are girls.

### 5. Half of the budget of a developing country comes from overseas aid.

FALSE: About 1% of the national budget of a developing country, on average, is from development assistance, and almost half is transferred from developing countries to affluent countries in the form of interest payments on debt.

### 6. Children are malnourished because they don't get enough food to eat.

FALSE AND TRUE: Not having enough food is one cause of malnutrition, but more common is a lack of enough types of nutritious foods and important micronutrients (such as vitamin A, iron and iodine), combined with lack of clean drinking water and chronic diarrhea and illness.

### 7. The rate of population growth in the developing world is decreasing.

TRUE: While in some places, the absolute number of people is growing, the rate of growth is declining &ndash; in time, the absolute number will also begin to decline.

**8. There is enough money and resources in the world to meet everyone's basic needs.**

TRUE: UNICEF estimates it would cost about \$4 billion to meet basic human needs (clean water and sanitation, adequate nutrition, health care and education). This amount is equivalent to less than half of the amount affluent countries spend on sport shoes in a year. It can be recovered if 20% of official development assistance and 20% of national budgets in developing countries were spent on basic human needs.

# Media Literacy for Development & Children's Rights

Looking Through  
the Lenses

Whose Lenses?

Adjusting the Focus

## WHY TEACH ABOUT MEDIA LITERACY?

Before they are two years old, many children are aware of racial differences. By the age of three, they may attach value judgments to those differences, and begin to stereotype people based on perceived individual or group characteristics such as gender or disability. How do such stereotypes come about? The first influences are the attitudes of people around them, often acquired unconsciously. Later, children absorb stereotypical messages from books, television, movies, magazines, newspapers and other media. Even the absence of certain people (ethnic groups, the elderly, the disabled, youth) from the media conveys a sense of the diminished worth of those groups in society.

By the age of ten, students hold stereotypes about people in other countries. An important source of these ideas is television and movies. News media largely project sensational images about unfamiliar people and places; in turn we use those images to form opinions about them. Representations of the world, especially the developing world, are very often reduced to stereotypical images. Through most Western media, we catch only glimpses of life in developing countries. The "news" usually consists of fleeting images of starving children, victims of unexplained wars, or desperate child labourers. Such stories leave many of us with the impression that developing countries in particular are mired in intractable problems, and never make progress.

If the perception that all Canadians live in igloos is a stereotype, surely those media images we see of people in developing countries don't fully reflect the daily lives and rich diversity of life there! We know from our own everyday experience that what appears on the news — the crimes and sensational events — do not represent the norms of our society. That is what makes them news. But when it comes to developing countries, most people have no counterweight of personal experience, no equivalent sense of the norms to set against the constant reporting of the exceptional.

It is critical to understand whose eyes we are looking through and what they have chosen to show and not to present, so our perceptions can be more objective and just. Our perceptions of people from other countries, particularly those in developing countries, may be distorted by a number of factors, including:

- our insufficient first hand experience of other countries
- the media -- particularly news media -- may be the dominant source of our images and perceptions of people from other countries
- the tendency of news media to focus on the dramatic and tragic or the exotic and traditional rather than everyday reality
- the legacy of colonization which has left behind assumptions of superiority on the part of many people of colonizing cultures

These factors can result in the formation of misperceptions, negative stereotypes and prejudice. Children -- and adults -- think, "they are not like us", and believe that their views are universally shared. Positive stereotypes are also harmful, by failing to acknowledge the diversity and essential dignity of all people. Such stereotyping harms everyone involved. The group which is being stereotyped may experience reduced self-esteem, lack of social and economic opportunities and other forms of overt or systemic discrimination. Those who are doing the stereotyping are also harmed. They develop an unrealistic, partial view of the world and of themselves and their place in it, and an inability to function effectively in our increasingly diverse and interconnected societies.

News media are not the only source of images of other people and of ourselves: the range and reach of media to which children are exposed has grown rapidly in this generation. It is estimated that a person in the Western world receives on average 1500 advertising messages per day. The result is a dense electronic bath in which children are immersed daily. What are the impacts on children? Entertainment media, advertisers and the Internet are key sources of images that children use to generate perceptions and make decisions. Even relief and development agencies, with the positive intention of fundraising, may reinforce stereotypes if they use images of pathetic children and imply that all children in developing countries are victims of starvation and disease -- and that only the aid of affluent donors can help them.

Children are particularly vulnerable to exploitation in the media, both as objects and as subjects. They have rights to be protected from exploitation and harm, and rights to access and create information that is important for their well-being. Just as bias and stereotyping are learned, they can also be changed through education. By learning skills for media literacy and responsibly exercising their rights, young people can adopt a critical stance to information and images they receive through the media and use media to access and disseminate information that will help ensure their healthy development and participation in society.

# Media Literacy for Development & Children's Rights

Looking Through  
the Lenses

Whose Lenses?

Adjusting the Focus

## DEFINITIONS FOR USE IN ACTIVITIES

Some of the terminology in this activity file will need careful explanation to students. The following definitions may be helpful as a starting point, but do not claim to be representative of all ways of thinking about these concepts. These definitions can be reviewed with students by presenting the definitions and terms in two separate lists, and guiding students to match the terms with their definitions.

### Images and Perceptions

Images are what we see; how we interpret them depends on our perceptions. The images we see also contribute to how we formulate our perceptions.

### Stereotyping

Stereotyping is based on the assumption that because a number of individuals share one attribute -- such as religion or gender -- they are similar in many others. Stereotypes arise from a need to conceptually organize the world around us, but they may also result in oversimplified beliefs, attitudes or uncritical judgments. This kind of arbitrary grouping of people can lead to prejudice against a particular perceived group.

### Prejudice

Prejudices are feelings or attitudes which a person holds on to despite contrary available evidence or experience. Some definitions also include the actions being directed against particular groups as a result of these feelings and attitudes.

### Discrimination

This term has the sense of prejudice in action. It is based on the creation of unfavourable distinctions between one group of people and another, often because of characteristics such as race, colour, gender, religion, socioeconomic status or class. It can take the form of more overt, individual action, or more systematic (and often hidden) institutional and government action.

### Racism

Racism refers to the assumption of superiority of one group, whether conscious or

unconscious, and its exertion of power to enforce this to the detriment of other racial groups.