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Building a Just and Sustainable World

EDUCATION CONNECTION | VISUAL LEARNING

Images, photos, and pictures stimulate the mind. For the viewer, they offer a chance to connect and question. They also offer potential for play and imagination, and pulling the observer into purposeful messages.

Most often, newspaper and magazine readers quickly glance at photos and their captions. With this YES! lesson plan, you and your students can luxuriate—and pause—to truly understand an image, its message, and why it's interesting (or not).



With These Hands

Step One: What do you notice? (before the facts)

Ask your students to make sense of the photograph by trusting their instincts of observation and inference. In doing so, the image offers possibilities and interpretations beyond a typical reading where the reader glances at a photograph to reinforce its title or caption. Do not introduce any facts, captions, or other written words. In response to the question, “What do you notice?” you may hear: *hands, a pin or needle, blue and white strips of something, orange cloth.*

Step Two: What are you wondering? (thinking about the facts)

After you’ve heard your students’ first observations, you may hear a peppering of questions: *What is the person doing? Is she making something? Is she taking something apart? What is the needle for?* This is a good time to reveal the photo’s caption and other information about the photo. Watch how the conversation shifts from what they believe to be true to discerning the facts about the photo.

Photo caption:

“A woman in Uganda rolls a strip of colored paper into a bead. She will string the beads together to make bracelets and necklaces for the BeadforLife program.” Photo by Charles Steinberg.

Photo facts:

BeadforLife is an international nonprofit organization that is working to fight extreme poverty in Uganda and other developing nations. In its beading program, women receive extensive training in how to roll beads out of recycled paper and string them into beautiful jewelry.

BeadforLife women also receive ongoing entrepreneurial and business skills training to prepare them to launch their own sustainable business once they graduate. Members increase their income by 7 to 10 times while enrolled in the program, and go on to run their own businesses. Common types of businesses that members open are poultry rearing, restaurants, retail stores, vegetable stands, tailoring and renting rooms.

Almost one person in five—1.2 billion men, women, and children—are currently living in a situation of extreme poverty, surviving on the equivalent of less than one dollar a day; half the people in the world are trying to manage below the poverty level of two dollars a day. Africa has 33 of the 49 poorest countries in the world.

Research shows that when women and girls earn income, they will reinvest 90 percent of it into their families, compared to just 30-40 percent for men.

Uganda is the same size as the state of Oregon. Uganda’s population is 35,873,253. Oregon’s population is 3,871,859.

Step 3: What next?

1. Some people feel that we have enough challenges with poverty in the United States and should focus our efforts at home. Why might it be important and rewarding for Americans to get involved with people in need from other countries?

2. The dream of many African mothers is to earn enough money to send their children to school. What dreams do your parents have for the money they earn?

3. Half of the 1.4 billion people living in extreme poverty throughout the world live in Africa. What does extreme poverty mean to you?

4. BeadforLife pays some of its members with Mobile Money—a non-coin based monetary system where a consumer can use a mobile phone to pay for services and digital or hard goods. Why do you think this is especially useful in developing countries? Could we ever use something like Mobile Money in the United States?

BeadforLife has a free, downloadable curriculum to help students better understand global poverty, to take action, and join the fight against it. Visit <http://www.beadforlife.org/en/take-action/educate-engage/teach-our-curriculum>.