

Using Images to Explore and Promote Inclusion

Experiences from Mpika Schools

Mpika, Zambia, 21-24 September 2004

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"I learned what free education really means, but we and the community still have to do things."

"I learned to draw. I never had ideas before, but today I just thought of an idea and put it on the paper."

"I was happy that everyone was participating, even those who can't draw had a chance."

"I learned that co-operation is good. By working together we can make things better."

"I saw the challenge of what we need to improve."

"I normally like working individually but enjoyed sharing."

"I learned how to exercise my freedoms, by saying the things I don't like and like."

School children, Mpika, Zambia

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Summary

Background

EENET led a two year participatory action research study entitled 'Understanding Community Initiatives to Improve Access to Education', from 2001 to 2003. The study was carried out in primary schools in Mpika, Zambia, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and was funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID). It involved developing appropriate and sustainable ways of building the capacity of key stakeholders in inclusive education to document their experience.

In this project inclusion was defined as the process of increasing the presence, participation and achievement of all students in their local schools, with particular reference to those groups of learners who are at risk of exclusion, marginalisation or underachievement.

Further funding was secured from DFID for the dissemination of this action research approach, from 2004 to 2005. One of the most promising and relevant approaches developed in the study was the use of images, rather than text, to promote reflection about the complex concept of inclusive education. Enabling practitioners and children themselves (including those with limited literacy skills) to tell their stories through images is a major part of the dissemination process.

The main focus of the dissemination is an interactive CD-ROM which includes examples of a wide range of action research methods developed and used as part of the study. Examples of how to use the research methods are provided through video and audio clips, photographs and maps from the work in Tanzania and Zambia. We are working closely with practitioners in Mpika, Zambia, and Northern Gonder, Ethiopia, as they use the CD-ROM.

Image-based and non-written activities

In September 2004 EENET's Research and Development Worker went to Mpika to work with Mr Paul Mumba, a teacher and a Zonal In-Service Provider. Together they supported teachers, parents and children from four schools as they began to use images as part of their ongoing development of more inclusive practices.

There were two main activities used: photography and mapping. Drama, photo elicitation and individual drawing activities were also used in two of the schools. Each class, of up to 60 children, was divided randomly into groups of about five. Three of these groups were given digital cameras and the children were asked to work co-operatively in their groups to take photos in the school environment of 'welcoming/unwelcoming places'. Once the photos had been printed the children made posters using the photos to tell the stories of what makes the school welcoming or unwelcoming. This exercise has been used in schools in the north-west of England with great success – especially with children who are disaffected.

Other groups were asked to look around the school environment to identify places they liked and disliked, but instead they drew maps to illustrate this. Some groups analysed and discussed photographs of other schools, comparing and contrasting with their experiences of their own school. Further groups created role plays depicting something that happens which makes them happy or unhappy to come to school. Finally individual drawing was used with children who finished their main activity early, and again took the theme 'things I do or that happen to me which make me happy/unhappy to be at school.

Active learning

References are made to the importance of active and co-operative learning in most of the literature on inclusive education. However educational transformation cannot take place only through *reading* about inclusive teaching and learning methodology. Teachers need to see and experience these new theories for themselves – something they were able to do when trying out the use of photography, mapping, drawing and drama techniques in the schools in Zambia. Organising children to work in groups and giving them tasks which they need to think through for themselves is all part of active learning. For most of the teachers, however, this was a new experience even though they have been discussing the importance of democracy, social justice, child rights and child participation in inclusive education for some years.

Children's participation

In our initial study (2001-03) the teachers found it difficult to inspire the children to write about their experience of inclusive education, but in the recent visit the children willingly and spontaneously wrote text to accompany their photographs, drawings, maps, posters and drama. The images captured, selected and/or created by the children provided the stimulus they needed to write about their experiences.

The importance of listening to different voices has been stressed throughout our action research project and in EENET's work as a whole. Listening to children is a vital part of this process. Most of the teachers involved in the recent visit welcomed this way of working and were glad to observe the theory being demonstrated. But some felt the need to direct the children to ensure a 'good' result, others encouraged them to copy from educational posters in order to improve the 'accuracy' of their drawings. It was clear that the children had little previous experience of expressing themselves through drawing and other non-written forms of expression, and that the teachers lacked awareness of the potential for activities like drawing to facilitate 'children's voices' and greater participation within a range of subjects.

Results of image-based activities

Initially the research facilitators led the activities and the teachers observed, but within a short period of time in all four schools the teachers became actively involved in the process and some tried out the photography activities alongside the children. The children were able to share their images and stories more widely by presenting their maps, posters, drawings and drama to

their classes and, in one school, to a group of parents attending a PTA meeting.

The facilitation of these image-based activities was a form of training which had unexpected outcomes. It was, in fact, training in active learning techniques which can be applied to a wide range of school-based activities. One of the teachers has already applied the methods to his work with his class on HIV/AIDS.

The activities were not only a form of action research, they were exercises in working together, sharing and speaking out. They demonstrated inclusion in action because all children were involved equally, spoke and were listened to, and helped each other. The activities therefore had a much greater impact as they illustrated concepts such as negotiation, democracy, respect and children's right to express themselves.

There is a lot of truth in the saying 'a picture paints a thousand words'. Each of the images produced during this short visit has its own story to tell. It was not possible to record such detail in observation notes, but by recording information about the schools pictorially and listening to the children's views as they created and presented these images, the external research facilitator was able to recall huge amounts of useful information.

Follow-up work

There are many ways for these activities to be followed up in Mpika. The schools could expand the range of activities to include art forms such as music, sculpture and puppetry and use local 'environmental' materials (leaves, twigs, string, stones, etc) when pens and paper are not available. The images could be used as the basis for writing activities. More parents should be introduced to the work their children have done, and invited to carry out similar activities. There could be a larger scale community meeting or exhibition using the images and stories developed by the children, parents and teachers. A longitudinal approach could also be tried, with photographs being taken in a further six or 12 months and discussions held to compare the images, debate changes, etc.

Beyond Mpika images of what inclusion looks like could be used in the teacher education and development process. The use of images within an action research approach could help provide teachers with the 'creative space' to reflect on their own values and attitudes about inclusive education as a starting point for educational change.

1. Introduction

This report describes activities carried out in four schools in Mpika, Zambia, in September 2004. The activities were based around the concept of 'image-based reflection' on the issue of inclusive education, and were facilitated by Ingrid Lewis (EENET) and Paul Mumba (teacher, Zonal In-service Provider and EENET's action research co-ordinator in Mpika). The activities build on previous work in the schools as part of EENET's ongoing action research project 'Understanding community initiatives to improve access to education'.¹

1.1. Why image-based activities?

EENET's action research project has involved the development of methodologies and tools to help teachers, pupils and community members to look more closely at their experiences of inclusion or exclusion in relation to education. The approach also aims to encourage the various stakeholders to work together to think about how to make their schools more inclusive, and then take action to make those changes happen.

Following the development of primarily writing-based activities in Tanzania and Zambia, a set of action research guidelines has been produced in CD-ROM format. This resource is now being widely disseminated, and feedback is being gathered with a view to issuing a revised version during 2005. As part of this dissemination phase, EENET has chosen to focus on one element of the guidelines for further development: image-based methodologies for reflection on inclusion.

This element was chosen for several reasons. The initial work in Tanzania and Zambia (on which the guidelines are based) did not fully address the use of non-written or non-verbal communication in the action research cycle. There is, consequently, an imbalance in the guidelines (and accompanying resources) which needs to be rectified. Also, in the process of preparing an end-of-project report for the donor (DFID), the issue of image-based reflection in Southern contexts emerged very clearly as an area that was of interest to many people, both practitioners and academics. This has led to EENET collaborating in several articles on the subject. Finally, the action research activities in Tanzania and Zambia did not involve as much participation of children and young people as we had hoped. The introduction of more 'child-friendly' image-based activities was therefore seen as important to the overall success of the action research cycle.

Photography and drawing activities have been used successfully with children in many places, and for a variety of purposes, such as planning or evaluation exercises in schools and development projects. From our limited experience of using images to promote reflection, it appears that they can be used as part of action research and can be a good way of bridging the gap between oral

¹ See EENET's website for more information <http://www.eenet.org.uk/action/action.shtml>

and literacy-based cultures. In particular images can be used to communicate ideas in contexts where a range of different languages are used. This is an approach which makes research accessible to people who have learning difficulties and others who cannot speak or write to express their feelings and ideas, either because of an impairment or because of abuse or other difficult issues. Drama-based activities have a similar impact to the use of images in research and development and have also been used to help children participate in development planning and evaluation.

1.2. Why Zambia?

The action research co-ordinator in Zambia had been keen to use photography and other image-based activities from the start of the project, but lacked experience to implement these activities fully. In addition the schools in Mpika have maintained a high level of commitment to the principle of action research, preparing and sharing a large number of written accounts of their experiences of tackling inclusion in their classes. They have also developed commitment to principles of child rights and listening to children's voices. EENET, through the efforts of the co-ordinator in Zambia, has been able to build and maintain a good relationship with a number of schools in Mpika. This good relationship with school management and staff, and the commitment to child rights ideals, would be essential for carrying out image-based activities with children in their classes.

1.3. Which activities were chosen and why?

Photography and photo elicitation

The main activity we chose to try in Mpika was photography. This is an area of particular interest for one of UK-based facilitators (who was unfortunately unable to travel to Zambia as planned). It was also something that the Zambian facilitator had tried on a small scale early on in the action research project, but which had not been followed up. Photo elicitation had been used by the Tanzanian facilitator to stimulate debates among workshop participants. The activity had produced encouraging results, suggesting that photos/photo elicitation and photography could be an ideal way to help the teachers of Mpika move forward in their efforts to include children's voices in their action research.

In this instance, the children using cameras were given the topic: 'places that make you feel welcome/unwelcome in school, or that you like/dislike' (it was hard to translate the term 'welcoming' directly into Bemba). They took photographs, and once printed, these pictures were used to create a poster to display the 'story' of what the pictures showed. The children doing photo elicitation from existing photos were asked: 'what is happening in each photo, and is this similar or different to your own school and how?'. They were asked to discuss and make notes.

Mapping

Mapping was another key activity chosen. Mapping activities are common in PRA work (which has inspired many elements of our action research approach) as a means of helping community members to think about the area in which they live and share their knowledge about key aspects of that area (eg, the location of certain health-related factors; or the movements of people or products within, into or from the area, etc). The mapping activity we used was designed to help children to think about the area that makes up their school, and to share with others their opinions about the welcoming and unwelcoming places or things they experience in that school area. The children were given time to discuss and survey their school, and then in their groups they drew illustrated maps showing the main places they had chosen as welcoming/unwelcoming during their discussions.

Drama

Drama is something that had only been tackled by one or two participants in the initial action research work, but which we felt would be a culturally-appropriate format that the children would feel comfortable using to express their feelings and opinions about their school. The topic for the plays was: 'things that happen in school that make you happy/unhappy about having to come to school'. Children were given time to prepare their own story line and scripts and to rehearse, and the plays were then performed at the end of the session.

Individual drawing

We used individual drawing activities mainly as 'fillers' when children finished their main activities early. We did not want to place too much emphasis on individual drawing as we knew that most of the children would be unfamiliar with creative drawing (due to the lack of art materials in the schools). We did not, therefore, want to dedicate lots of time to an activity that could leave children working alone and possibly in a way they might not feel comfortable with (the other activities all involved group work and peer support, even if the activities were still unfamiliar). The topic for the individual drawing was: 'things you do or that happen in school that make you happy/unhappy about having to come to school'. Children doing individual drawings were not stopped from discussing their pictures with others, and they also had an opportunity to present their pictures at the end of the session. Although individual drawing was a filler, the activity allowed children to express themselves in a unique way, showing more feelings than perhaps in some of the other activities. Some of the individual drawing was very expressive!

1.4. The schedule

EENET is fortunate to have an excellent ongoing relationship with Paul Mumba, the facilitator of the initial action research activities, who is also a teacher and Zonal In-service Provider in Mpika. He was able to make many arrangements with teachers, heads and district officials prior to my arrival.

Our schedule in Mpika was as follows:

Monday 21 st September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation and planning (including re-visiting schools to confirm the week's schedule) • Courtesy call and feedback session with District Education Board Secretary • Meeting with selected teachers to share ideas for this week's classroom activities and give feedback on 'Researching our Experience' (RoE) and action research guidelines
Tuesday 22 nd September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RoE feedback session with teachers Kabale Basic School • Photography and mapping activities with Mr Mumbo's class
Wednesday 23 rd September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RoE feedback session with teachers Nyanji Basic School • Photography, mapping and individual drawing activities with Mr Silupya's class,
Thursday 24 th September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RoE feedback session with teachers Mpika Basic School • Photography/photo elicitation, mapping, drama and individual drawing activities with Ms Shibumba's class • RoE feedback session with teachers Musakanya Basic School • Courtesy meeting with District Commissioner
Friday 25 th September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photography/photo elicitation, mapping, drama and individual drawing activities with Mr Mwanza's class

1.5. The classes

Mr Mumbo's class, Kabale Basic School

Grade 8, mixed, approx 57 children

Compared with other schools in the district, this is a relatively well-developed school, with above average buildings and sanitation facilities, set in well-kept grounds.

Mr Silupya's class, Nyanji Basic School

Grade 7, mixed, approx 53 children

This is probably the poorest of the four schools we visited, with basic classroom structures and limited grounds. The school is an 'overflow' school, as Kabale was unable to accommodate all the local children. Nyanji needs to expand, but is facing problems acquiring the land and funding the building. There is a certain amount of rivalry between Kabale and Nyanji pupils.

Ms Shibumba's class, Mpika Basic School

Grade 8, mixed, approx 55 children

Another relatively well-developed school in the centre of the town, with good buildings and large grounds. It accommodates the district's Teachers' Resource Centre.

Mr Mwanza's class, Chitulika Basic School

Grade 7, mixed, approx 40 children

Chitulika has recently been moved from its previous site (nearby) to make way for a new high school. The basic school has therefore had to start from scratch with building new classrooms. The work is behind schedule as parents are reluctant to contribute more time or money, having seen their previous efforts handed over to the high school. Some classrooms are of a poor standard. There is a section of the nearby village occupying the school grounds, which causes some tensions.

2. The activities

2.1. Working in groups

2.1.1. Selecting groups

All of the activities we carried out (except the individual drawing) required the children to work in groups, and make efforts to co-operate and negotiate within these groups. Given the large class sizes, the easiest option would have been to select a small sample of children to do the activities. We could have asked the teacher to choose the children, or we could have had a random selection process. This would have made facilitation and monitoring a much simpler (and probably a more thorough) process. However, we did not want to create any sense of favouritism or resentment as a result of our presence in the class, and so we opted to involve all class members in the activities.

We aimed to have the children select their own groups, so that they could choose to work with friends with whom they would feel comfortable. The group selection process happened slightly differently in each class.

In Kabale the children self-selected quickly and smoothly into groups of five, and many groups chose to mix boys and girls. Minimal assistance was then needed to place two 'left-over' children in groups and to move the groups to stand further apart from each other, so we could distinguish them easily.

In Nyanji the teacher chose to use the 'lifeboats' ice-breaker to get the children into groups of five. This worked well in terms of relaxing the children (and getting them moving on a cold morning). The down side was that the activity involves holding on to people (in your lifeboat) and so inevitably the children split themselves into same-gender groups (boys and girls of that age probably won't willingly choose to hug each other!). When the groups picked their activity card from a bag, all three 'camera' cards were pulled out by all-boy groups. We therefore had to use another 'pick a number from a bag' exercise to swap one of these groups with an all-girl group.

The children in Mpika again self-selected quite quickly and easily, with just some assistance needed to make some groups into sixes rather than fives. Four pupils arrived late and the teacher initially suggested we turn them away as the groups had already been formed and the activities were being chosen. Instead the UK facilitator allocated them to groups, as she didn't know the children so her choices were hopefully seen as unbiased.

The children did not really self-select in Chitulika. Before they could get started the teacher intervened and moved them into groups, primarily according to who was already sitting next to each other. The class was smaller, and so most groups were of four, rather than five.

Lifeboats grouping exercise - Nyanji

2.1.2. Allocating activities

The groups were allocated their activities at random, in an attempt to avoid children feeling that the camera groups were in some way favoured (using cameras is not a common activity for most of the children, and we worried that it could be seen as more exciting than drawing). One member from each group closed their eyes and picked a piece of paper from a bag, indicating the activity their group would do. This worked smoothly and the children did not complain about being allocated a certain activity.

2.1.3. Giving instructions to groups

In the first two schools we carried out two activities, but in the second two schools there were four simultaneous activities happening. We therefore had to give instructions in stages.

In the first two schools we followed this pattern of giving instructions:

- First instructions to map-making groups (they then leave the class)
- First instructions to camera groups (they then leave the class)
- Map-making groups return and are given second instructions (they then work in class)
- Camera groups return and are given a 'filler' activity while their photos are printed
- Camera groups are given their photos and second instructions (they then work in class)

In the second two schools we followed this pattern of giving instructions:

- First instructions to map-making groups (they then leave the class)
- First instructions to drama groups (they then leave the class)
- First instructions to photo elicitation groups (they then leave the class)
- First instructions to camera groups (they then leave the class)
- Map-making groups return and are given second instructions (they then work in class)
- Drama groups return and are given 'filler' activities (they then work in class)
- Photo elicitation groups return and are given second instructions/'filler' activities (they then work in class)
- Camera groups return and are given a 'filler' activity while their photos are printed
- Camera groups are given their photos and second instructions (they then work in class)

This pattern meant some groups had to sit quietly while the others were given their instructions, but this did not cause any problems.

[See Appendix 1 for details of the instructions given.]

In the first two schools, instructions were mainly given first in English by the UK facilitator and translated into Bemba by the Zambian facilitator (or the class teacher). During the camera instructions at Kabale neither was in the room, as they were observing the mapping groups outside, but this lack of translation does not seem to have affected the children's understanding of the activity or camera functions. In the second two schools, the Zambian facilitator gave more of the instructions directly in Bemba. He was, by then, familiar with the activities, and because of the large number of groups working on different activities, both facilitators needed to be giving different instructions to different groups at the same time! In Chitulika, some of the 'second instructions' were given only in English (the teacher insisting the pupils understood), but as a result the groups' understanding of their task may not have been quite as thorough as in previous classes.

2.1.4. Observations on group work dynamics

It had been suggested in the early planning stages that children should work in pairs, especially in the photography activity (based on the experiences in the UK). This was not feasible given the large class sizes (mostly 50+). It was also felt that the children probably needed to work in larger groups to ensure sufficient debate: in a group of five there is more chance that someone will be confident enough to spark the debate or to disagree and generate the process of negotiation we were aiming for. Most of the children were not very familiar with the kind of group work involved in these activities, ie, being left alone to discuss, negotiate and co-operate with their colleagues, without a formal exercise being set, for which there are right and wrong answers to be found. It

was therefore felt that working in pairs might not offer sufficient peer support to get the groups working in this 'new' way.

Some classes warmed to the group work faster than others. For example, the class in Chitulika appeared much more subdued when we arrived than the other classes, and it took probably two hours before they started to interact as animatedly as the other classes. We were late arriving at the school, so it is possible that the children had had more time to find out that we were coming and to get nervous about what was going to happen. The interactions of the teacher(s) may also have affected the mood of the class.

In all classes the energy (movement and talking within and between groups) increased significantly throughout the session, though at no time were the groups behaving in an unruly or uncontrolled way. There were two obvious instances observed of groups apparently not functioning as a unit: one in Kabale, where a boy complained he'd been excluded from the map-making, (the other group members said he kept disappearing, however); and one in Chitulika, where one boy dominated a joint drawing by a drama group and the others in the group looked bored and fed up, and were eventually given their own paper to draw on.

A group working on their photo poster, Mpika

The available drawing materials were shared within and between groups without argument in all classes. This seemed most obvious in Nyanji, where the map groups that had been working for a while spontaneously offered pens to the camera groups that were just starting their posters and struggling to find enough pens/pencils.

Group members were observed in several classes to be helping each other with spellings and language problems while preparing their dramas or writing on their maps, posters and drawings. One girl in Mpika was observed to be finding it very difficult to get started with an individual drawing, not knowing

what to draw or how to draw. Her friend gave her encouragement and ideas for how to tackle the task. This is an opportunity most teachers fail to utilise in their classes. While schools emphasise co-operative groups, teachers lack knowledge of specific activities to promote such groups.

On the whole the children were very good at respecting each other's opinions and at ensuring that every one in their group had a chance to speak. One child was observed telling the rest of the group to be quiet because another child in the group wanted to say something and that child had never said anything in class before so he should be given a chance now.

The groups all seemed to stay 'on task', despite being given the freedom to work outside and to walk around the school. No groups were observed discussing non-task-related issues or using the opportunity to play or do nothing.

We were not able to observe the group work as closely as hoped, to hear in detail the discussions and debates taking place. There were too many groups to be able to spend much time with each. Groups also went shy and quiet, most noticeably when the UK facilitator approached; heated debates would calm down or the children would make themselves busy with drawing! This is an inevitable reaction to the presence of an outsider, especially one they have only known for an hour, and who probably has a translator with her as well. The Zambian facilitator noticed that most discussions within the groups were aimed at children helping each other. They therefore may have stopped in the presence of an outsider because individualism is prominent in traditional teaching: children are not encouraged to help each other in class, and are not used to working in this way.

2.2. Photography

2.2.1. Equipment used

Photography was carried out in all four schools, using the same three digital cameras.² Our budget was very limited (about £30 per camera), but the cameras we used had nevertheless been carefully chosen based on user reviews which recommended them as ideal first cameras for children. The camera is quite large for a digital camera, but is solid and unlikely to be damaged easily. Its function buttons are well laid out and easy to follow. It has a digital screen for viewing function settings and for use as a view-finder/play-back screen. We set the cameras up to take pictures of the highest resolution (to compensate for the generally lower quality images from such a cheap camera!) and to be auto-flash (so children did not have to worry about changing the settings in dark places).

² Vivicam 355, 1.3 megapixel cameras, each with 64mb compact flash memory cards.

The digital pictures were printed in 6' x 4' format on a small, low-cost portable photo printer (cost approximately £75).³ We stored the images first to a laptop and then printed them, but the printer also has the capacity to print directly from the memory cards, without the need for a computer. We used low-cost photo paper from a UK supermarket, and with the cost of ink included, each print cost approximately £0.17. To carry out the activity in four classes, with over 200 photos taken by 60 pupils, the total cost of the activity (including the purchase of cameras and printer) was therefore approximately £200.

2.2.2. Children's responses to the activity

In all schools the children handled the cameras with care. We had expected them to be very excited by the chance to use a camera. They were excited, but nevertheless carried out the activity sensibly and with maturity. Prior to starting the activities we had held a short meeting with the participating teachers. One of the concerns that had been raised was that the camera groups would attract a lot of attention and excitement from others in the school, who would be curious and keen to get themselves photographed. However, there did not appear to be much disruption caused to other classes, and the camera groups stuck to their brief and did not end up taking pictures of crowds of children in the playground.

The groups had been briefed that discussion and negotiation was essential. Before a photograph could be taken by any member of the group, the others had to listen to their reasons for wanting to take the picture and have a discussion about whether or not they agreed. Although it was not easy to observe the children as they moved around the school (the grounds are generally large and we had many children to monitor) we were able to see heated debates taking place in all schools, as the children tried to work out where they should go next, and what aspects of the school could be considered welcoming or unwelcoming. We also observed them taking turns to use the cameras, generally without any arguments, although in Nyanji one girl was seen to be reluctant to let her friends take the camera from her when she'd finished taking a picture.⁴

Children approached the activity seriously, taking great care to line-up their shots, and group members gave each other advice about the best angle for a particular picture. Most pictures showing people were rather posed, but we had told the children they must ask permission before photographing a person, which would have taken away the opportunity for spontaneity.

The responses to the printed pictures was very enthusiastic. Children from other groups crowded round to see the pictures and talk about them. In

³ Hewlett-Packard Photosmart 245.

⁴ We had suggested that the children take two pictures each, as we knew we would not have time to print more than 30 or 40 images 'on the spot', and we were not able to return to the schools later in the day as they all operate morning and afternoon shifts in order to fit in enough classes. Our classes would not therefore be in school in the afternoons.

Chitulika the pictures started to be distributed around the class, and there was a risk that there would be none left for the posters!

The children again worked well in their groups to discuss the layout and captioning of their photo posters. They generally did not begin sticking the photo to the poster sheet until everyone agreed where to put them. They also helped each other with writing the captions, constructing sentences in English and correcting spellings. Many groups practised the captions on other paper before writing them onto the poster.

In all classes the teacher and facilitators spent some time observing and chatting with the groups as they worked on the posters. The UK facilitator talked with one group in Kabale which had placed three pictures under the heading of 'bad' and 8 under the heading 'good'. She asked them why they had more pictures of good things. They said it was because they liked their school and wanted to see it develop. They explained that this opportunity for development was represented by the photos of the sports trophies the school has won, and by a photo of a Grade 4 class – “the young ones coming up”. They had also taken a picture of the vegetable garden and placed it under the 'bad' heading. The facilitator asked them to explain, because some people might think having a vegetable garden was a good thing. They explained that it is a good thing, but the vegetables in this garden are unhealthy. The plot needs to be replanted.

Another group in Nyanji explained their pictures to the UK facilitator in Bemba. She did not have the translator present, but the pictures and the children's spoken and body language alone were able to tell the story. They had pictures of the glass windows in another classroom, and pictures of the open block windows in their own room, and they wanted proper windows for their room.

2.2.3. Challenges and solutions

The cameras

After the first session in Kabale, we had to slightly revise the training we gave the children in using the cameras. Firstly, we decided not to show them how to use the screen as a view-finder. In the very bright light outside, the screen was barely visible, making it hard for them see what they were taking pictures of. Use of the standard view-finder was therefore encouraged in the other classes. We also introduced some instructions about checking the 'battery life' symbol. The batteries in the cameras had failed unexpectedly fast; the cameras appeared to be working, but were unable to store images on the memory cards. We had to install new batteries half way through the session in Kabale, and the children had to go back and take some of their shots again. The new batteries we put in the cameras then lasted throughout the rest of the week!

Printing

Printing the pictures was a challenge in all schools except Mpika. In Kabale there was only one power socket in the head's office, so the laptop could not be powered. The battery failed too soon, and the UK facilitator had to return to the accommodation hostel (two minute drive away) to finish the printing. Nyanji had no electricity supply, and so all printing had to be done at the hostel (again only a few minutes away). At Mpika we were able to use the power supply in the Teachers' Resource Centre, which is in the school grounds. Chitulika also had no power supply, but the UK facilitator was able to use the Teachers' Resource Centre again (about a 10 minute drive).

On each occasion it took about an hour to complete the printing and return the pictures to the children. As we had set them other drawing activities, we avoided them getting bored during that time. However, it did generally mean the camera groups had only about an hour to design their posters; they had to rush a little to finish, while the other groups were already finishing and starting to move around and talk to each other.

Ideally these activities would be done over a longer timeframe (days not hours). Printing could then be less rushed (and less stressful for the person doing the printing!). We were fortunate that there were no technical problems with the cameras and printer, as there would probably not have been time to resolve them and complete the activities during the day's session.

Each group took a minimum of two pictures per person. Some groups took more. One group of four children in Chitulika took 28 pictures! This provided us with a dilemma, as there was not time to print them all. We therefore selected a batch of photos that were very similar (people standing next to our car) and printed these altogether on an index sheet. The children could then see the images, and use them in their miniature form if they wanted. In Kabale one girl had taken a picture that was totally obscured by her hand. The UK facilitator chose not to print the image, in order to save time, ink and paper. The girl was upset not to see her image, and she found it hard to understand the reason why it had not been printed, so a decision was made that even spoiled pictures would be printed on subsequent days.

Space

Finding space for the children to work on their photo posters was difficult in every class. The other groups by that point had already taken all available desk space for their maps and individual drawing activities. In Kabale and Mpika we were able to use other rooms for the photo poster work. In Chitulika the children were just about able to squeeze onto the desks. In Nyanji, however, children had to sit on the floor to make their posters. This was far from ideal. The concrete floor (apart from being uncomfortable and cold on a very chilly day), was pot-holed and dusty. The children placed their plastic-covered exercise books on the ground, to create a smooth clean surface to work on. The books therefore got dirty, as did the children's clothes. The class experiences desk shortages regularly, so sitting on the floor was not unusual for the children, but we should think about carrying a suitable floor mat in future, so that we are not adding to the children's discomfort.

Working on the floor, Nyanji

2.2.4. Children's outputs

On the whole the children took great photos, with good composition and showing quite clearly their intended subjects. There were very few instances of hands covering the lens or accidental shots of the ground or sky. Some pictures taken indoors were too dark to see clearly the intended subject; either bright light from a window had prevented the auto-flash from working, or the children had accidentally switched the flash off. In almost every class there were some places that had been photographed by all groups. For example, photos of the toilets or rubbish pits were common 'bad places'; a well maintained school office or assembly area and flag were frequently repeated 'good' places. But every group did also have some unique images (often those involving people).

Two of the most striking photographs taken by children, Chitulika and Nyanji

In some ways the main excitement in this activity was in taking the photos and seeing them in their printed form: the creation of a poster at times felt like a slight anti-climax for the children.

The posters made by the children to display their photos and elaborate on the 'story' told in the photos often lacked creativity. There may be several reasons for this: the relatively short time available; many of the children had already had a chance to do some individual drawing and did not want to do any more; they were not used to creating that sort of display; it was nearing the end of their school day,⁵ and they were probably feeling tired and hungry. The posters from Nyanji were perhaps the most creative and decorated. We specifically encouraged the children that day to be as creative as possible, and the translator spent some time with one group discussing ideas for how they might do that. On subsequent days, we were less able to spend time elaborating on our initial instructions or encouraging creativity, because of the number of activities taking place. In Kabale and Mpika the photo poster work happened in a separate room from the main activities, and was supervised less. This possibly allowed more opportunity for copying between groups, and may partly explain their similar simple layouts.

Most of the posters were captioned or labelled in some way, though a few were not (the groups ran out of time, or had stuck so many pictures to their poster there was no space for words). All captioning was in English, although the children had been told they should feel free to use Bemba if they wanted. The translator at one point helped one group in Kabale to phrase a sentence in English with which they were struggling. She later explained to me that the Bemba version would have been even more complex, which is why the children were keen to write it in English: their written Bemba not necessarily being significantly better than their written English.

The posters (even those without captions) worked well as a basis for the children to speak about their views of the school to others during informal chats and the presentation session. Every child in the group was able to say something about the school, based on the images on the poster, and many children offered detailed explanations of the pictures that they had taken or which were most poignant for them.

[See Appendix 2 for details and photographs of the posters.]

2.2.5. Teachers' photography

In Nyanji, Mpika and Chitulika we had time to let the class teacher take some photos. We were only able to print photos from the teacher in Mpika (and then only 10 from her 20+ images, due to time constraints), as the other schools lacked power supplies. The unprinted pictures will be sent to the teachers for them to use at a later date.

The teachers all took interesting images, often quite different from those taken by the children. They had far more people in their photos, including the type of posed shots and group pictures that were absent in almost all of the children's photographs. The teachers may have felt more at ease with 'directing' the

⁵ The morning shift is in class from 7am until 12 noon.

subjects of their photos, or with entering other classes and offices to photograph pupils or staff. They were also not given formal instructions, so may not have felt the need to stay within the parameters set for the children's photography groups.

The teacher in Mpika made a poster and presented it to her class at the end of the session. She had taken some very good pictures, and used them to explain to the class what she, as a teacher, felt was welcoming and unwelcoming, to both herself and the pupils. She highlighted a number of things that the children had not mentioned, including the state of the staff room; a class where one of her colleagues was teaching 120 children because two other teachers were on maternity leave; and the support room for girl pupils who are orphans, very poor, being abused, etc. (see Appendix 2)

The pictures taken by the other teachers also need to be used in activities that encourage discussions and comparisons with the children's images. This is something that will be followed up by the Zambian facilitator.

2.2.6. Informal camera groups

In Nyanji and Mpika, the map-making groups finished before the other groups, and so we offered some of them the chance to take some pictures. They were given much more brief training and instructions on what to photograph. In Nyanji, one boy reluctantly went with his group and returned as soon as he'd taken his photos, so that he could finish the detailed colouring-in of his group's map, which he felt was more important. We had been worried that using cameras would be seen by the children as more exciting and 'important' than the other activities, but this example, and several others, showed that we underestimated the reaction that children would have to the drawing opportunities.

The pictures taken by the informal photography groups were much more people-focused. They consisted heavily of friends posing and playing, with a few images of liked or disliked places. In a way these pictures are very useful: highlighting the kind of (much less helpful) results that this activity could produce if it is not carefully introduced.

2.2.7. Appropriateness of the activity

Based on the experiences in the UK, both the photography and mapping activities had encouraged the children to think more about 'places and spaces' and 'things', rather than about people. Photographing people, especially to present them in the category of unwelcoming/disliked, could have caused problems for the children in an environment that is not yet fully accepting of children's views or of notions of 'upward evaluation' (being honestly assessed by your staff or pupils). We also did not want large numbers of pictures of children to be taken, because of issues related to

privacy and protection, should we (or the schools) want to publish or display the pictures in future. We therefore used the 'places and spaces' approach, but had to adapt it after the second day as we felt it was not wholly appropriate to the Zambian context.

With all discussions that encourage people to identify positive and negative things about where they live, work or learn, there is a risk that negatives will outweigh positives, and create depression or a sense of hopelessness. The class in Nyanji (the school with the least facilities) came the closest to this reaction. While the groups were happy and enjoying the activity, it became increasingly clear (especially during their presentations to each other) that they were placing far more emphasis on the places, spaces and things in their school that they didn't like, and that they felt there were far more of these places than there were good ones.

One comment by a girl pupil caused particular alarm: "I used to think the school was good but now I know it isn't". In response to the children's reactions, the Zambian facilitator led a spontaneous session about the history of the school, to help the children understand more about why it is as it is. The children joined in a lively session, answering questions and laughing. He also encouraged them to think about how they could put their awareness of the problems to good use. For example, they could talk to their parents, who might be able to help with low-cost solutions, such as providing some wood to make a roof for the toilet; and they could talk to their teachers, because teachers often do not get to see the same places in the school that the children get to see, so they might not know about all the problems. He also told them how pupils in Kabale had been involved in making bricks for the new classrooms they now enjoyed.

A similar short session was facilitated in Chitulika, in which the Zambian facilitator encouraged the children to think about what changes and solutions they might suggest if an MoE person came to the school.

The facilitator's approach to this session was based on the belief that the children already see and know about many of the problems in their schools, but are not encouraged or allowed to express their views or concerns, and are 'kept in the dark' about the reasons behind the problems and about the solutions that may already be in the pipeline. The activity, therefore, rather than bringing out totally new concerns and fears, helped the children to voice what they already felt inside, and to realise the reasons behind the situation and the solutions that lie ahead, in which they can play a role.

The class teacher further encouraged the children to make use of their awareness of the school, and their potential to make changes. He asked them to think about what would be needed to remove the ruined latrine that was an eyesore and a danger. The children listed the tools needed and decided that these could all be found at home. The teacher then suggested that he and the class could spend Friday working together to remove the ruin, which they agreed to do.

2.3. Mapping

2.3.1. Equipment used

We bought flipchart paper and crayons locally, and used packs of colouring pens (60 pens) and pencils (200) purchased in the UK for under £10. We did not have sufficient materials to be able to leave a set with each class after the activity finished.

2.3.2. Children's responses to the activity

We decided to let the mapping groups go outside to have their discussions so that they would not feel stuck indoors while the camera groups had the chance to wander around. We also hoped it would stimulate more ideas and discussions about the places or things they liked or did not like if they were able to visit and look more closely at those places/things. As with the camera groups the children took the task seriously. We observed them animatedly discussing places, pointing at certain things they wanted their friends to look more closely at and debating whether or not something was good or bad. Although the initial instructions did not mention the details of the map-making stage of the activity, the children knew they were in the 'map' groups, and some were observed discussing how they might represent their school in map form.

During the drawing stage of the map-making the children were again encouraged to co-operate with each other and to make sure that group members agreed before any drawing was done, and that everyone had a fair chance to do some drawing/writing. Each group was given a large sheet of paper, and was told they could borrow any of the pens, pencils, crayons, erasers and sharpeners at the front of the class (but that they must share the supplies with other groups). Some classes needed to be encouraged several times to feel free to come and take some drawing materials, rather than just working in grey pencil.

In all classes the children wanted to use other paper first to prepare a draft map, or to practise drawing buildings or writing certain words. Some began using their exercise books, so we quickly handed out other paper for them to use, so as not to waste their own paper. Almost every group used rulers (or other items with straight edges), some used set-squares and protractors to draw the map with greater precision. One group in Kabale was observed having a long debate about the relative size of one of the buildings on the map. Other discussions observed in various classes were around:

- which building goes where?
- isn't that building too big?
- putting teachers' names to classrooms
- where does the door go?

- where should the toilets go

In Kabale there was some initial concern that the groups would spend so long creating technically good maps that the purpose of the task – to show the welcoming/unwelcoming places – would be lost. In the end they managed to do both. Subsequent classes spent slightly less time making accurate maps, and instead focused on drawing only the buildings or other landmarks they needed, colouring-in or labelling the map.

Map-making group, Kabale

Again the teachers and facilitators were able to talk to some groups as they worked, to find out more about what they were drawing and why. One (all-girl) map group the UK facilitator talked to in Nyanji explained that they had put a particular tree on the map as a bad place, because there should be flowers in that place, which would look much nicer. Later a boys' groups said they had put the tree on the map as a good place because it gave them shade, and the mango tree gave fruit they could eat.

Children in all schools were told that they could use Bemba for their discussions and for writing any words on their maps. While all discussion were in Bemba, they chose to write labels and descriptions in English. Just one girls' group in Nyanji had used Bemba on their map to explain something they couldn't describe in English: that the toilets were a place they found unwelcoming because they had no roofs, so in the rainy season the children would get very wet.

2.3.3. Challenges and solutions

Inevitably there were some problems with desk space. This was most noticeable in Nyanji where the class had old, broken bench-desks. These could be put together to make a small table, but it was still too small for a flipchart sheet, and often the two benches were of uneven height. Several groups therefore struggled to get all five members working on the map at the same time, and movement around the map (eg, to look at or work on a different part of the sheet) was restricted by the benches. Two groups used a table borrowed from another room. The dynamics in those groups were noticeably different: everyone was involved and could see the entire map all the time, and there was more movement and discussion (the children stood in a circle around the table).

In Chitulika the map-making groups were given their second set of instructions in English only, because the teacher, Zambian facilitator and translator were with the other groups. This may have limited their understanding of the activity. Their maps were less map-like than in previous classes, and one group had drawn only good places.

In Kabale the children used mainly grey pencil and just a few colours. Any labelling on the map was also done in pencil. As a result it is hard to read the maps other than close up, and they have not really photographed well (we left all outputs with the classes and took photographic records for ourselves). On subsequent days we asked the children to use pens to write any words on their maps, posters or other drawings.

2.3.4. Children's outputs

The maps created by the children were excellent: creative, colourful and often incredibly detailed. Some children applied their previous knowledge of maps or geography by including symbols and keys instead of/in addition to written labels. Without verbal explanations, most maps conveyed an idea of what the children like or find welcoming about their school, and what they don't like or find unwelcoming. Some lacked sufficient detail to stand alone without explanation, but they provided a good basis for the groups to speak about their views of the school to their classmates, parents and teacher(s).

2.3.5. Appropriateness of the activity

Mapping the school offered an activity that was fun and which encouraged group co-operation, debate and negotiation, while at the same time employing skills or knowledge that the children already had, or would benefit from in their formal learning. The children were seen to be using ideas relevant to geography (eg, symbols and keys) and maths (scale and angles); as well as practising English in their writing on the maps.

As mentioned above, the activity needs to be carefully facilitated and followed up, especially if the maps become biased towards the negative aspects of the school. The reactions from the children in Nyanji encouraged us to place less emphasis on mapping in the next two classes, and to try some other activities that would allow the children to think more about activities and practices in the school (which they were unable to place easily on a map), as well as just the environment and infrastructure.

2.4. Drama

The use of role play and drama is something we have suggested in our action research guidelines, but not something that had been used much in the action research work that led to the guidelines. It is, however, a tried and tested method for enabling community members, especially children, to express ideas and experiences in a way that does not require reading or writing skills, and that may offer a 'safer' option than simply standing up and expressing personal opinions.

In the first two classes we did not attempt any drama activities. We were one facilitator short and felt that two activities with 50+ would be more than enough to test us! However, following the session at Nyanji we wanted to try some activities that offered the children more scope to discuss and express their thoughts on the *practices and activities* of the school. We therefore introduced a drama activity in the second two schools.

2.4.1. Children's responses to the activity

The two drama groups were told that their task was to prepare a five-minute play about something that happens at school that makes them happy or unhappy to be at school. We then asked the two groups to decide for themselves which group would do the happy and which the unhappy play. They did this without any problem.

We did not know how much experience the children had of drama, so we offered some basic suggestions about choosing the storyline and the characters, preparing a script and rehearsing. But the guidance was minimal.

The groups were allowed to work outside, so that they would have the space and freedom to discuss ideas and practice their acting without disturbing the other groups, feeling embarrassed, or spoiling the surprise of the play (if there was one). In both Mpika and Chitulika the groups creating the 'unhappy' dramas seemed to spend longer on their preparations. Groups in both schools wrote scripts or reminder notes about actions or dialogue.

Drama groups preparing, Chitulika and Mpika

It was not easy to observe the groups closely in their preparations; again they would go shy and quiet when they realised someone was listening! But it was clear to see that the children were putting a lot of energy into deciding what the play would be about and who was going to do what. There was a great deal of movement and expression. One all-girl group planned to sing and dance, and were practicing this for a while outside.

2.4.2. Challenges and solutions

In both schools the drama groups finished their preparation much earlier than we had expected. When questioned they insisted they had prepared their characters and script and had practised the play. We therefore needed to find them other activities to fill the time before they could perform their plays. In Mpika they were given the photo elicitation exercise (see below) followed by individual drawing. In Chitulika we gave the groups large sheets of paper with instructions to prepare a backdrop for their play. The picture should illustrate what the play was about, for those people who might be unable to come and see the play. As with the map-making they were instructed to work together as a group and share the drawing.

In Chitulika the children may not have had as much time as they might have liked for their preparations. We had suggested they take about 20 minutes to go outside and think about the play they would do. This would not be so long that they would waste a lot of time doing nothing if they were stuck, but long enough to give them a feel for what the task would entail. We would then assess at that point how much more time they needed and how they were getting on. The teacher⁶, however, seemed to interpret this as a deadline, and was seen ushering the children back into class after 20 minutes.

Although the children then said they had finished their preparation, this may have been the response they assumed was expected because they thought their time was up. Or it may have been that they wanted to get on with doing the more fun activity of drawing backdrops! They did have plenty of opportunity to continue discussing the plays, as they worked in the same

⁶ This was not the class teacher but a fellow teacher who wanted to participate in the activities and learn about image-based activities.

groups to draw their backdrops, but not to keep rehearsing. For teachers not used to working in this way, the 'unstructured' feel to the activities is inevitably strange. As facilitators we could probably have done more to brief and support them; explaining better that the process was as important as the outputs, and therefore that sticking to a rigidly timed schedule was not essential and could be counter-productive.

2.4.3. Children's outputs

The plays varied in length and complexity. In both schools the drama 'something that makes us unhappy about coming to school' was significantly longer, more detailed and had a more coherent storyline. Both 'happy' plays did not really have very clear storylines, but it appears the children were role playing their teachers' behaviour and interactions in class.

The 'happy' play in Mpika was only about a minute long, with a very short song and a statement at the end that they like their teacher because she advises them about HIV. In Chitulika the 'happy' play was longer and depicted the teacher welcoming the class in the morning and setting an exercise. At break the children role played a discussion about how committed the teacher was because he was marking the morning's activities.

In Mpika the 'unhappy' play revolved around infrastructure and facilities. A teacher was trying to start the lesson but the pupils were jostling to get a seat at a desk and some eventually ended up on the floor. The teacher complained about the situation: cracked walls, insufficient desks, even the inappropriate board duster. He added that the Ministry of Education should be doing more to fund the maintenance of the school. He set the class a complex maths problem, left them alone to work on it, then returned demanding to see their work. He then complained about the state of the books presented to him.

The 'unhappy' play in Chitulika was the most complex and lengthy. It tackled the issue of absenteeism. The children didn't want to go to school because they hated having to carry bricks before class, and did not like being punished (with brick carrying) for lateness and being dirty, and so one boy ended up going to drink beer instead of going to school. The issue of free education was central to the play: with parents and their children debating why it was called 'free' if they still had to contribute so much to the building of the school.

Most of the plays were fast-moving and fairly light-hearted, and the audience received them with enthusiasm and laughter. Some lines in the play caused the audience to start talking and commenting among themselves for a while, though not to the extent that they lost interest in the play.

2.4.4. Appropriateness of the activity

The children seemed to find it quite easy to express their opinions about teachers, the school, the MoE, etc, through the plays. The 'unhappy' plays

were more outspoken than expected, and showed a good awareness of things happening in and around the school. The format seems to have enabled the children to express their thoughts, but without necessarily taking full personal responsibility for them. For example, in Mpika a narrator summarised at the end of the play and said the play had shown this situation happened in 'some schools', without directly saying it was their school (though they have cracks in the classroom wall and too few desks).

2.5. Photo elicitation

As part of EENET's initial action research activities (2001-2003) photo elicitation had been tried briefly in Tanzania, with groups of teachers, parents and children. It had worked well as a means of stimulating debates and encouraging the participants to think about their own situations.

Photo elicitation was not used in the first two schools we visited in Mpika. However, by the third day we wanted to try some other ideas in addition to photography and mapping. A set of five photos was printed for each group. Three photographs were the same as those used in Tanzania, two were new images taken by the children in Kabale school earlier in the week.

The groups were told to look closely at the pictures and discuss them. They were given some paper on which were written the following questions to help guide their discussions:

What do you think is happening in each picture? Is this situation the same or different to your school, and how?

The groups were allowed to work outside the classroom. They could walk around the school if they wanted to directly compare the situations depicted in the photos with what was happening in their own school.

2.5.1. Children's responses to the activity

In Chitulika we were not able to observe the groups much while they were outside, there were too many other things going on. But in Mpika both groups were observed having detailed debates about the pictures, pointing out things they thought needed more attention and which confirmed or contradicted what their friends were saying. They chose to sit outside but did not move around the school as much as the groups working on other activities. They made notes on the paper provided, answering the two questions in relation to each photograph.

In Mpika, when the groups returned to the classroom, the UK facilitator sat with them and looked at their notes about the photos. Both elicitation groups had highlighted the obvious differences between two particular photos – one showed a class with many children and few desks, the other a picture of many desks but few pupils. They commented that the latter was not like their school. The photo in question was one of a separate class of deaf pupils. The

facilitator decided to tell the groups that the pupils in the 'many desks, few pupils' photo were all deaf. They discussed briefly and said that explained the picture, because there are not many deaf children in schools. Neither group had commented on the one small boy sitting alone. The facilitator asked them why they thought he might be like this. They said maybe he doesn't want to associate or the others don't like him. Unfortunately it was not possible to continue the discussion at length, as other groups were returning to the class and needed to be set other instructions. However, the groups were observed looking again at the picture and discussing it with renewed vigour.

In Chitulika the two photo elicitation groups went outside to discuss the photos they had been given. When they came back it was clear that the two groups had worked together and their notes about what they thought was happening in the photos were identical. It felt as if they had treated it as a 'test' to which there was a right and wrong answer, as with most classroom exercises. When introducing the activity we should be much more careful about stressing that this is an activity for which there is no right and wrong answer – it is about your own ideas and opinions.

Since the groups had probably not worked as independent units, (ie, had not discussed but possibly deferred to the person(s) who was most likely to give the 'correct' answer), they were set an additional task, making sure that the groups stayed apart. They were asked to look again at the pictures and draw circles around the things that seemed similar or different to their own school, and discuss why they seemed the same/different. Although both groups inevitably did pick some of the same things and gave some similar reasons, this time there were variations. They also seemed to be discussing the pictures in more depth, rather than just coming up with an 'answer' and then moving on to the next picture.

2.5.2. Challenges and solutions

This activity potentially feels like 'work'. We had given the groups some paper on which to write their ideas. The paper contained the questions for stimulating discussion and spaces to write notes about each photo; quite a formal format. This had been chosen as a pragmatic solution: we knew we would not be able to spend enough time observing and discussing with the groups to find out their responses to the photos, but we needed some record of the ideas they were having, to see just how useful photo elicitation could be at helping them to talk about the welcomingness of their school. Ideally this activity should be done in a more relaxed way, with plenty of time for the teacher/facilitator to watch the groups and listen to their ideas about what story the photos are telling, without the children necessarily having to write anything (which in many ways negates the fact that this is an image-based, not a writing-based activity!). Having said that, the activity was still a useful exercise in group work (eg, children helped each other with spellings) and negotiation (working out what should be written).

If everyone in the class were doing the same activity this 'work feel' would not be a problem, but because the majority of the class was drawing, acting or taking photographs we were concerned not to make the photo elicitation groups feel like they had drawn the short straw. In Mpika, when the groups said they had finished we did not push them to continue, but moved them on to some individual drawing. In Chitulika, we did set them an additional task when they first said they had finished (due to the copying between the two groups) but again we let them move on to drawing once they had obviously exhausted the elicitation activity.

2.5.3. Appropriateness of the activity

The activity was about looking at the other schools in the pictures, but at the same time looking more closely at one's own school through comparison with the pictures. The photos used in the activity were therefore carefully chosen so that the children would have a chance to see the positive as well as the negative in their own schools. For instance, the pictures used in Chitulika were changed slightly from those used in Mpika. Chitulika is a less developed school and several of the pictures used in Mpika depicted fairly well developed schools. One image was therefore swapped prior to the Chitulika session, so that the set included a picture of a village school with a thatched roof and broken mud walls.

The activity offered a useful way of encouraging the children to think about and talk about their own school. It provided a 'starting point' for their discussions and observations. If children are not used to working in groups to have open discussions about a chosen topic (as these children weren't), it may be hard for them to know where to start and what the parameters of the discussion are supposed to be. The photos and guidance questions provided a core around which they could build their discussions and ideas, and an improved confidence to start talking.

2.6. Individual drawing

Art and creative drawing is not a common activity in the schools, due to the lack of materials and what one teacher described as 'lack of space in the curriculum'. We therefore decided that we would not place a strong emphasis on individual drawing, in case the children found it difficult to draw from their imagination. We used individual drawing as a supplementary activity, to keep the children occupied when they had finished their main activity and were waiting for the other groups to finish.

The children were asked to draw two pictures of themselves: one showing themselves doing something that makes them happy about coming to school and the other showing themselves doing something that makes them unhappy about school.

A display of drawings, Mpika

The individual drawing was done on A4 paper. The children used the same set of pens, pencils, crayons, erasers and sharpeners as the map-making and photo poster groups, so they needed to negotiate and share materials.

2.6.1. Children's responses to the activity

On the whole the children responded well to the activity. Most continued to work with the others in their group and they were chatting and discussing their drawings continuously.

A group working on their individual drawings, Nyanji

Some children found the activity difficult, to start with. One girl in Mpika said that she just did not know where to start or what to draw, as she had never done this before, but her friends gave her some ideas and encouragement. Drawing from imagination, as opposed to copying from another image, was

unfamiliar to some of the children. In Chitulika the teacher had to be stopped from giving the children educational posters from which they could copy pictures of people. The children were reminded that they were drawing themselves, and that the posters did not show pictures of them, so they would have to use their memories and imaginations to create accurate images of themselves.

In the feedback at the end of each session, there was at least one child who said that he/she had learned how to draw. One boy said “I learned to draw. I never had ideas before, but today I just thought of an idea and put it on the paper”.

2.6.2. Children’s outputs

A large collection of drawings was produced in the three schools where individual drawing took place (Nyanji, Mpika, Chitulika). The instructions (‘draw yourself doing something’) were, on the whole, interpreted literally by the children. Few created detailed pictures of the setting or background, drawing just themselves and a few items essential to ‘the story’. In addition, most used sentences and paragraphs to describe what they were doing in the picture (although this was not part of the instructions) rather than using the picture on its own to explain everything.

The pictures showed a wide range of situations that made the children happy or unhappy about being at school. Some children did not stick totally to the theme, drawing places they didn’t like/liked rather than a situation in which they were involved, but they were in the minority. Situations that made them happy included reading, sports/games activities, wearing the uniform, their teacher. Unhappy situations included having to work before class (sweeping/moving bricks, digging pits), fellow pupils ‘insulting’, fighting, being beaten by teachers.

In Chitulika and Mpika many children drew ‘reading’ as the activity that made them happy. The very obvious repetition of this theme (especially in Chitulika) raises questions that it would be good to follow up with the pupils (although we did not have time during the sessions): was there a lot of copying between the children, was there influence from the teacher, do all the children really like reading above all other possible positive things they do in school, or do they have so few positive things happening in school that reading stands out as the only obvious activity they could depict?

2.6.3. Appropriateness of the activity

The activity worked better than expected, and although some children did find creative drawing difficult, the freedom to talk about the activity with friends helped them to overcome this.

Asking the children to draw situations in which they are involved, rather than just things or places they liked/disliked, did help to bring out more ideas and discussions around the practices in the school which can make children feel welcome and included, or unwelcome and excluded. It is therefore probably a useful supplement to activities like photography and mapping which may give more focus to infrastructural issues. The lack of drawing experience meant the children were not able to use fully their pictures to tell the story without writing explanations. Perhaps in similar situations the children could be told that no writing is allowed, to further stimulate them to create more complex drawings showing every aspect of the scene or story.

2.7. Presentations

At the end of each session at least 30 minutes was spent sharing the outputs with the whole class. Map-making and photography groups had the opportunity to tell the class about their maps and posters. Each child in every group spoke. Some were initially not keen to do it, but their friends encouraged them and supported them. There was very little teasing, but plenty of laughing along with points that amused the class or which seemed particularly poignant to the children.

Most of the groups elaborated on the details that could be seen/read on their maps/posters. Some children gave passionate speeches about the particular aspects of the maps/posters that meant the most to them. The rest of the class listened well, though at times (following points which particularly attracted their attention) they got quite noisy and chatty.

Children watching a group present their map, Nyanji

In the two schools where we tried drama, the presentation session started with the 'unhappy' drama and ended with the 'happy' drama.

Children who had done the photo elicitation activity and individual drawing were given the chance to tell the class about their drawings. We chose not to ask them to give a presentation about the photos they had looked at because the rest of the class had not seen the photos and would not have been able to relate to any comments about them (we didn't have enough sets of the 6'x4' pictures for everyone to see and no enlarged images that could be shown at the front of the class). The presentations of the drawings were again very good, and often elaborated on. Once girl presented her drawing which showed that being beaten by the teacher was something that made her unhappy about coming to school. However, she went on to say that beating is child abuse and should be stopped. She was applauded by the class.

There were lively feedback sessions in every school, in which the pupils told us what they had learned and experienced during the day (both in terms of skills and ideas about the school). The pupils were keen and honest in their comments.

2.8. Parents' session

In Chitulika, a PTA meeting was taking place at the school, and we were able to arrange for the parents to come into the classroom to watch the groups of children working on their activities, and discuss with them what they were doing.

This was a lively and enthusiastic session, though not very long, as the parents had other commitments and work to do. Many of the children spoke confidently to the parents about what their images were showing. The parents asked questions and gave feedback and praise to the children for the quality of their work.

Parents' session, Chitulika

This session is the kind of thing that needs to be replicated in follow-up to the classroom activities, so that parents and community members have a chance to hear the children's voices and to contribute their own views and ideas about the schools.

2.9. Teachers' responses to the activities

The class teachers responded very positively to all of the activities. They were helpful and keen to see how the activities would work in their class.

On the whole the teachers allowed the children to get on with the activities at their own pace and in their own way. They observed the process and chatted to the children occasionally about what they were doing or what their photos/drawings/maps meant. In Kabale the teacher commented several times that he was impressed with the levels of 'interaction' in the class during the photography and mapping activities, and with the amount of spontaneous discussion, debate and co-operation happening.

However, in Chitulika the teacher(s) appeared to feel more concerned about how well the children 'performed' and so intervened on several occasions to make sure they were doing things 'properly'. For example, the teacher advised the children how to line up their pictures, at one point taking the camera from the group to check the view they were aiming at. He was reminded that ideally we needed the children to choose their own shots, even if they made some mistakes with the composition, lighting, etc.

While we had anticipated that the children would be excited by the photography activities, we had not thought about the teachers' reactions. The teacher at Chitulika removed one of the printed photographs as soon as they were given to the group, as it showed him with a colleague, and he wanted to take it to show the colleague. The teacher had to be reminded to return the picture to the group so that they could continue making the poster!

The teachers will hopefully take away many thoughts and ideas as a result of participating in the activities. Learning about methods to help children participate in action research into the inclusiveness/exclusiveness of the school is just one aspect of the sessions we facilitated. Most of the teachers commented that the activities had highlighted the children's abilities to think about and analyse a topic in a way the teachers had not seen before. They mentioned that the sessions were more 'interactive' than the classroom practices usually are. One teacher said that he had wanted to do something to hear children's voices, but did not know how to do it: the activities had provided a demonstration of more active learning approaches which could help him put his commitment to child rights and participation into practice.

Following participation in the session, the Kabale teacher just two days later used the ideas inspired by the photography and mapping activities to facilitate his class to have a discussion about HIV, and was amazed by just how much the children contributed, when previous attempts had not yielded much participation. One teacher later asked children to draw what they did not like in their classroom and most of the children drew him caning them. They wrote next to the pictures his statements during caning: "I am not beating you but beating the animal in you!". This came out strongly among all children and it led to the teacher being counselled on his classroom organisation.

2.10. Follow-up to the activities

Actual

In the short time available we were not able to take the activities as far as we would have liked. In addition to the children participating in activities, their teachers (and other teachers in the school) and parents also need to become involved, in order to build up a bigger picture of the school and its experiences in relation to inclusion and welcomingness.

The children need to have opportunities to explain their ideas/outputs to these other groups, and the parents/teachers need a chance to listen and comment on the children's thoughts, and add their own perspectives.

Already some of this has happened. In Kabale the class presented their work to the other teachers in the school. The children presented their pictures well, but were actually so strong that teachers felt they were being challenged and felt they were belittled by the children's presentations. However, the children continued to be assertive to put across their points. The teachers felt children should not just challenge: they should come to help change their situation where necessary instead of being critical.

Suggested

There are many possible ways that the initial images-based work could be followed up. For example, the posters/maps could be used to stimulate other activities and debates, or as the basis for writing stories. Children may find it easier now to write about their experiences if they have already been through a process of looking at and thinking about them, and have the 'skeleton' of a story presented in picture form. Many children wrote freely, captioning their images, so moving this onto a story-writing activity should not be too difficult.

In some schools (eg, Nyanji) the involvement of parents in follow-up activities may be the most important, in order to bring all stakeholders into the debates about the seemingly insurmountable difficulties facing the school/pupils.

On a larger scale, there could be a community meeting or an exhibition. This would share the children's work and the ideas of image-based reflection more widely, and provide recognition of the children's voices and achievements.

Pictures and posters could be 'kept alive': the creators could revisit them regularly, show them to other people, add or change bits as the story of their school changes. The images should not necessarily be treated as if carved in stone.

A longitudinal approach could be tried, for example, taking photographs now of an unwelcoming place, and then taking more pictures in six or 12 months, to compare if anything has changed.

Alternative art forms such as music, dance and puppetry, or art using locally available materials could be tried.

3. Conclusion

The introduction of image-based activities into the classrooms served two important purposes. First, the activities enabled children (and teachers/parents to a lesser extent) to express and share freely their views about their school and whether it was welcoming/inclusive or not. Second, the activities demonstrated to teachers and pupils, and offered them first hand experience of, a more active approach to classroom interactions. This reinforced some of the theory and ideas around child rights and participation that have existed in the schools for several years, but which have not been put into practice due to lack of experience.

New perspectives on familiar sights

The process of 'documenting' the school in images or other non-written media provided an opportunity for children and teachers to see the school from different perspectives: what was familiar to them because they saw it every day, suddenly became unfamiliar, or at least attracted new attention and thought. Both pupils and teachers learned new things about certain areas of their schools: teachers in particular learned about the 'child-only' places where they would not normally go.

Documenting our world in images does not necessarily always involve a process of 'seeing things with new eyes': for many of the children it offered an outlet for opinions and emotions they already held, and which they had already thought about a great deal.

Children were facilitated to see (often for the first time) the causes/solutions to situations they face – and possibly try to ignore – on a daily basis. This was achieved through discussing what they saw with their peers, who may have different knowledge about the situation, or experience of how similar situations have been managed elsewhere. Some of the children demonstrated that they had developed new awareness of their own role in the causes of some of the problems facing the school, and their potential to act to solve the problems. The process in some instances helped to stop children (and parents/teachers) feeling 'in the dark' about aspects of their school. The images they created helped children to raise issues or questions which could be discussed or answered in a legitimate way, whereas in their usual classroom/home interactions they perhaps could not just approach a teacher/parent and demand to know something about the school. The process also helped raise awareness among teachers that children want to, and should be, kept informed about the way their school operates: it's not just 'adult business'.

The benefits of communicating through images

Not everyone is able to communicate or confident about communicating directly with others through written or spoken words. The use of photography, mapping and drawing can help people communicate their ideas through the images they create. This may or may not be supplemented with written or spoken words. Several children involved in our activities were described by their peers/teachers as never usually participating or speaking; yet they

conveyed lots of information through their images, or through talking about their images. For some children the images, but especially the drama, enabled them to feel confident enough to tell quite a 'risky' story (about bad things done by parents/teachers) whilst 'hiding behind' the characters; such stories might not have been told in direct communication.

Images can provide a much more memorable way of recording a 'story'. By looking at the photographs taken by the children/teachers, the external facilitator has been able to recall (even months later) vast amounts of information about what the children said the photographs depict, why they are liked/disliked places, what solutions the children suggested, etc. Such recall would have been unlikely if the information had been presented in just verbal or written format.

Pictures can also tell different stories to different people if you do not have the 'creator's' explanations available. In this way, what a viewer sees in the image, or the story he/she believes the image is portraying, will be (subconsciously) influenced by the viewer's own perspectives and experiences. Pictures are therefore a useful way of facilitating people to reflect on their own experiences and share these experiences with others.

Influence on classroom practice

Feedback from participating teachers strongly suggested that the image-based activities offered them a chance to see and practise what they already believed in theory about child rights and participation in learning. Teachers felt that you cannot learn these concepts purely from books, they have to be seen in action; but opportunities to observe such activities are rare in the Zambian context.

The activities helped to demonstrate and develop group dynamics in the classes; essential building blocks for co-operative learning. Consequently more children's voices were heard than ever before and children's creativity was enhanced. Most teachers were surprised by the work their pupils were capable of, when facilitated to work in groups and without being directed or instructed in the traditional way.

Indeed, image-based activities have more potential for bringing about changes to teaching/learning approaches than to the 'physical' aspects of schools (the latter should not be expected as an outcome). It will, however, be hard to measure the impact of the images work and say with any certainty that there is a direct causal relationship between this work and any changes taking place. The schools in Mpika have been, and continue to be, influenced by many different inputs.

Relevance in a Southern context

One of our reasons for carrying out the image-based activities – particularly the photography – was to assess the relevance of this approach in resource-poor contexts. Most previous work in this area has been in Northern contexts, where children are familiar with photography, cameras and drawing materials.

Our experience indicates that these activities are appropriate in resource-poor places, but need to be carefully prepared and facilitated. The activities can easily encourage a focus on negative aspects, especially when participants are instructed to focus on unwelcoming 'places and spaces' (infrastructure) in their schools/communities. In resource-poor situations, there is limited scope for improving most of the infrastructural problems facing schools, (though some improvements are of course feasible in a context of stakeholder participation, and should not be automatically dismissed as impossible). An over-emphasis on negative aspects of the school that cannot be changed could lead to participants feeling despondent and helpless, rather than empowered and included.

Image-based activities for facilitating children to talk about their school therefore need to be designed in a way that: allows sufficient scope for discussing positive aspects; encourages a focus on education-related practices and behaviours (which may be easier to improve than infrastructure); includes an element of confidence, capacity and awareness building so that participants see themselves as agents for change in situations they find negative, and not just victims of negative circumstances.

Another concern prior to starting the work was that there would be resentment towards those using cameras, since so few children usually have the opportunity to use them. This did not happen. We ensured that photography was not presented to the children as being more important than the other activities (indeed in the Zambian context drawing materials are rare in schools, and so attracted as much attention from the children as the cameras). In addition, where feasible, we offered as many children as possible the chance to try using the cameras. In resource-poor situations, 'unusual' materials need not be a source of concern, so long as facilitators think carefully about how they present and portray them.

Although we provided some drawing materials, there was not enough for every child, and we had initially worried that there would be friction between/within groups as a result. On the contrary, the lack of resources encouraged resourcefulness and collaboration between the children: sharing pens, sharing desk space, creating makeshift desks and work surfaces, etc. Therefore the use of image-based activities in a situation of limited or no formal art materials could be seen as a useful way to encourage co-operative learning and creativity in classroom activities. Indeed a useful follow-up activity to establish the sustainability of an images approach would be to try some images work with no pens or paper, but relying solely on children's resourcefulness to find materials from their environment.

Our short piece of work in Mpika has demonstrated the benefits of image-based methods within action research. It has also shown the potential of these activities for opening doors to more child-focused, interactive classroom practice. EENET will remain committed to promoting action research to help practitioners and communities learn about and improve inclusive education, and we will continue to support and learn from the teachers in Mpika, whose commitment and enthusiasm made this piece of work possible.

Appendix 1: Instructions

The following instructions were given to the children participating in the activities.

Mapping

“In your groups I want you to discuss this topic:

Where are the places in your school where you feel welcome (the places that you like)? Where are the places in your school where you do not feel welcome (the places you do not like)?

If you want, you can go outside and walk around to remind yourself about which places you like or do not like. The important thing is to discuss with each other and to give everyone a chance to share their views. And you must respect each other's views, but you can ask people to give a reason why they have chosen a certain place.

Come back to the classroom in about 15 minutes.”

[When the children return]

“Now you have discussed and looked at the places you like or do not like, we want you to draw a map.

The map should show your school grounds, the buildings and any other important places. You must add to your map the places you like or do not like. If you want to you can write words to say why you like/do not like the place. Or you can draw pictures of the places.

If you have any problems or do not know what to do, ask for help. Be as creative as you want.

Remember – you must discuss in your group first. You need to agree how you want to design your map, what to put as good and bad places.

Make sure you all join in and that you share the pencils, etc.”

Photography

Instructions for using the camera

The children were given these instructions verbally:

To switch on the camera

slide the silver button called "POWER". If the camera is on you will see a number in the small display screen on the top of the camera.

To take pictures

make sure the big silver dial on the back of the camera is set to the red symbol. Then to take photographs – look through this small viewfinder (or look at the big screen on the back of the camera) and press the shiny silver button on the top of the camera. You should hear a beep, this means you have taken a picture.

To switch on the big screen on the back of the camera

press the small button "DISP"

[This instruction was omitted after the first day, as it was too difficult for the children to see the screen in bright sunlight.]

To view the pictures you have already taken, turn the dial to the green arrow.

Instructions for taking photos

"In your groups I want you to discuss and negotiate this topic:

What are the things in your school that make you feel welcome or that you like (the good things about your school)? What are the things in school that make you feel unwelcome or that you do not like (the bad things about your school)?

When (and only when) you agree on a good or bad thing, take a photograph of it (make sure you follow the basic rules that I will give you in a minute)."

Basic rules for the camera groups to follow

1. Stay inside the school grounds.
2. Ask permission before entering a classroom or office to take a picture.
3. Ask permission before taking a photo of a person or persons.
4. Take photos mainly of 'places' and 'spaces' – not of people, unless those people specifically make you feel welcome or unwelcome in school.

5. Do not waste pictures just on snapping your friends!
6. Ask for help if you have any problems at all with the camera.
7. Discuss and negotiate what pictures to take – take a picture only when the group agrees.
8. Take turns to use the camera – everyone in the group must have a chance to take at least one photo – be fair with each other.
9. Remember – do not disturb any classes taking exams!

Instructions for making posters, after the photographs have been printed

“We want you to make a poster display using your photos. Discuss in your groups how you want to display the photos, so that you clearly show the things that you like/that are good about your school, and the things that you do not like, the bad things about your school.

You can stick the photos to this paper. You can also write on the paper if you want to describe what the photos show. You can even add drawings to the poster if you want to.

Be creative – do whatever you want so that your poster shows clearly the good and bad things about your school.

Remember, you need to discuss first, so that you agree in your group how you will design your poster before you start. Make sure you share the work, the pencils, etc.

If you have any problems make sure that you ask for help.”

Drama

“I’m sure there are there some things that happen at school or in the classroom that you really like, which make you happy that you can come to school? Or maybe there are some things which happen at school that you do not like, and which make you unhappy that you have to come to school.

Well, we want you to make a short play about one of these situations. First, which group is going to make a play about something that happens that makes them happy, and which will do the play about an unhappy situation at school?”

[Children in the two groups decide between them].

“OK, now we want you to choose, one situation that happens at school, and make a role play about it.

First in your groups you need to decide what situation you are going to make a play about.

Then you need to decide who the main characters are in this play. In other words, who is involved in this situation that makes you feel happy or unhappy to be at school.

Then you need to decide who will act out each of these characters.

And finally you need to work out what your characters will say and do.

You should aim to make a play that is about 5-10 minutes long.

You can go outside to discuss and rehearse, and if you want to write down the script, you can use the pens and paper provided.”

Photo elicitation

“In your groups we want you to discuss these photographs. You need to think about:

What do you think is happening in each photograph?

Is your school or class the same as or different from those in the photographs? How is it the same or different?

If you want, you can go outside to have your discussions. You can walk around your school and have a look, so that you can see if it is the same or different from the ones the photographs. Here is some paper on which you can write some notes if you want to.”

Individual drawing

“I’d like you to draw two pictures of yourself. In one picture you need to draw a picture of yourself doing something at school that makes you feel happy. In the other picture you have to draw yourself doing something at school that makes you feel unhappy.”

Appendix 2: What the children said

The notes below were taken by the external facilitator (mainly via an interpreter) as the children presented their work to the class. In each group there was more than one child presenting the group's work, but the notes do not reflect which child says what, as there was not enough time to minute the presentations in such detail.

Kabale

Group 8 mapping

The area behind the school is not good, people use it as a path to cut through. The pit latrines smell bad. The pits of paper/rubbish are bad because the rubbish blows back into the school yard. And behind our class the ground is not swept. Some people don't use the toilets, they just go behind the blocks, and that is not good. The centre ground is good, nicely swept. The bell [a gong type bell hanging between two poles] used by the timekeeper is good because it tells you when to start or when announcements are being made from the head teacher. It helps you to know what to do. The ablutions block has running water so you can wash your hands afterwards and avoid diseases.

Group 2 mapping

There is a block that is unfinished and people have written insults on the walls, which is not good. The assembly area is good – "I like its beauty". The school grounds are very dusty, they need to be sprinkled with water. Zanzibar market [informal market area next to the school] is not a hygienic way to sell food. The school tank is good, we get water. And the netball ground is good because we can have competitions with other schools.

Group 3 mapping

The ground for games and competitions is good. Zanzibar market should be stopped from being near the school. The food is badly prepared and could cause cholera. The trees are not good because the leaves are always falling. The sign post at the school gate gives people directions, which is good. The ablution block has flush toilets and the netball ground is also good.

Group 3 photography

The netball ground is bad because it is too rough and sandy. The rubbish in the pit should be burned, so that it doesn't come back into school (plus some children play in the rubbish). The grounds are good, but there are pot holes and it needs cleaning. The ablution block should be well maintained, it's a pride to have it – we're the only school in Mpika to have it. The water tank is good – we get water for drinking and for the garden and for avoiding dust by sprinkling the ground. Because of the sign post people don't need to ask direction to the school, they can find it easily. The assembly area is good

enough, but is not well maintained because it is used as a short cut by some teachers.

Group 2 photography

The sign post is good. One block has no roof, so it gets used as a toilet and gets written on. The assembly area is good, because there you get information from the head. [This child accidentally called it the 'national assembly' by mistake, which led to lots of laughter and jokes.] The pit latrines have no roofs and it is not advisable to use them but some still do. The rubbish pit – we have taken a picture of putting rubbish back in, to show that the rubbish blows out of the pit.

Group 1 photography

The garden is not looking nice. We need to remove the bad vegetables and put in new ones. It needs watering. The old block is too open. We don't like the classes with broken windows. We like the tank and having water when we need it. It is very encouraging to compete with other schools and win – we have the [sports] trophies. The photo of our classroom is because it is good. We were impressed with the G4 class – it was the cleanest this morning. The flag is good, it shows we are independent.

Nyanji

Map group

The toilets are not good because there is no shelter in the rain. The location of the sand pile used for building is not good (too near the class). The tree is not good enough – it drops leaves and these have to be swept up. The signpost is good because it helps people with directions to the school.

Group 3 photography

The next class is not good. The floor is bad, with holes and dust which makes you cough. The hill is not good because pupils go there to hide. The school ground is not good because it has lots of holes and stones, and it gets used as a toilet – so it is no good for playing. The trees touch the power lines which is not good. The colours of the flag are good [child tried to explain what the colours stand for, but could only remember 2 of the 4 colours].

Group1 photography (all girls)

We like the surroundings under the flag because it is always clean. The pile of bricks is in a bad place, too near the class. We like the class near where the head is because it has a covered walkway. The signpost should be repainted to be more attractive.

Map group

We dislike the windows made from blocks. The signpost is attractive because it gives directions to strangers. The flag shows that this is a government/important institution. They are happy to have toilets because it means they don't have to go in the surroundings.

Map group

The road to school is very dusty so your shoes get dusty before class. The sign post has an address on it, which is useful for people. The netball area has no tracks on it. The ground has holes and stones so it is not easy to play barefoot and snakes like to hide in the holes. The toilets are not good because there are no doors, so you can easily be seen. The mango tree is good because it gives fruit you can eat.

Map group

The sign should be repainted. The windows are bad. We benefit from the tree because it gives them shelter when waiting for the teacher or friends.

Map group

The location of the sewerage tank is bad, it overflows. The hill has snakes hiding, but children use it anyway to escape. We like the glass windows, but not the block windows. The netball pitch should be maintained.

Group 2 photography

The classroom is very dark and the floor has pot holes. We don't like the surroundings which are not good for the younger ones. The senior teachers' office is small and doesn't seem good enough for a senior office. The main office is messy and the books are all unarranged.

Map group

We like the school and enjoy lessons, that's why I [the boy who presented] am still here. We don't like the windows – you can't call them a window, when it rains the rain comes in and the wet bricks fall over. The [play] ground is near the offices so when playing you risk hitting a teacher or window with the ball. The toilets have no roofs, so it is difficult to use them when it rains because the pupils have no coats or umbrellas. The signpost is not strong enough – it wobbles when you lean on it and it needs repainting.

Map group

The windows are bad, but the route from the signpost is good. [There was a lot of discussing and laughing when the children saw the group had put a roof on the toilets because there is no roof]. The guava tree has leaves which fall in wind and rain and we have to sweep these up before class.

Mpika

Drama – something that happens in school that makes you unhappy

The children did a sketch about desk problems in their school. They also talked about broken windows and cracks in the walls.

In a lesson the teacher was being tough with them. He was complaining about the conditions, about the standard of the duster, the walls, etc. He says we need to do more to maintain this school and should be asking the government to maintain it better.

The teacher sets a tough maths problems then gets up and leaves the pupils to try to solve it. Then he returns, demands a chair and demands to see their work.

Photography group

The windows are broken in the school, and they need to be replaced. But the teachers' resource centre is always neat, clean and quiet. The toilets and the rubbish pits are dirty. The head's office has nice pictures on the walls. The windows have been broken because stones are put on the ledges to wedge the windows open (latches broken). Now the rain comes into class. This room and the teacher are good, she treats us well. There is a photo of two [out-of-school] children hanging around and they looked naughty and dirty, and I didn't like that. The school sign is nice and clean though.

Photography group

The teacher's house is bad, it has cracks and looks dirty. The toilets are dirty and we can suffer from illnesses. There is a fallen tree in the grounds and children can hurt themselves when playing. There is graffiti in some places – the children should stop it! [notes on the positive side of the photo poster not available due to translator not being available for a few minutes.]

Photography group

Having a rubbish pit near the library is a bad idea, it stinks when you are passing through the library. The pit needs to be moved. The deputy head has a nice office – clean, lots of pictures. The toilets are bad – people 'miss' the hole! The uniform is good, we like this. And we like the maths teacher, he teaches us well [class claps and cheers]. The tuck shop is not good, it's in the wrong place over there [near a pit?]. We don't like the sitting arrangements, on the floor. There was one class we photographed which we liked – the pupils were 'sitting good' [don't know if this means being well-behaved or sitting comfortably].

Group 1 mapping

We like this room, comparing this school with others, we're good because we have the teachers' resource centre here. We like the library, but there are not

enough books to read. The pitch is near the graveyard, many pupils are fearful. We like the general surroundings, they look attractive because of the trees.

Group 2 mapping

The roads through school that people use as cut-throughs are not good. The toilets are small, scattered and ruined. The market is too near and pupils sneak out to go to it. There is a rumour that the whole school used to be a graveyard and this causes fear, and now people use it as a route to the graveyard, which is not good. The library is not well stocked, and we can hear a lot of noise from the vehicles on the road nearby.

Photo elicitation group talk about their individual drawing work. A few samples:

My picture shows I don't like sweeping. I want to encourage the Ministry of Education and teachers to employ someone to sweep for us [class laughs].

My picture shows I don't like working [eg sweeping the school] before coming to class. It makes me tired and I can't concentrate in class then.

My picture shows I don't like being beaten "it is child abuse".

Teacher's photo poster

I also have things that I find welcoming and unwelcoming about this school. Welcoming: my colleagues help me. I am the HIV focal point and they encourage and inspire me to keep going with this. I like the HIV sign. I also like the 'comfort office' for girl children with problems, orphans, those whose parents can't pay, etc. I like this office and am happy because someone is supporting the girl child. I like the counselling and disciplining office – it gives us a way forward with the daily occurrences.

Unwelcoming: At the moment we have one very overcrowded class. One teacher has 130 pupils, because two teachers are on maternity leave. [To the class] Do you think these pupils are getting what they need? [Everyone answers: 'no'] So, to me this is an unwelcoming sight. The staffroom has no furniture, so you can see there are no teachers in it. We can't use it for doing our preparation work. I also find the small market ('Zanzibar') overcrowded and hygienic. The children are buying food from it, it needs moving.

Drama – something that makes you feel happy to come to school

[This drama was very short]

The children come into class. The teacher is nice and asks them if they are OK. [Then a short song and one girl says ‘we like the teacher advising us against HIV – the end].

Chitulika

Drama – something that makes you unhappy about coming to school

A mother and father are talking: the son is late home from school. They wonder what makes him late, and start checking the neighbourhood.

The daughter arrives. She says she can’t go to school anymore. The teacher tells them to work before class (carrying water and bricks) and the children don’t like this.

The parents complain that the son goes to drink beer instead of going to class. The boy says it’s because he gets to school late and doesn’t like being punished for being late by having to carry bricks. He complains that the head tells them it’s now free education, yet they are still having to work when they get to school by moving the bricks [for the new classroom].

The school complains that the parents don’t pay [for helping build the new classroom]. But they say that even if they pay they don’t see any outcome: the foundations have been there for a long time, but the school is still too small for everyone locally.

They children blame the government for not sending enough funds; and they ask why it’s called free education when they still have to pay. The mother says there is no money for paying workers to make the classroom [that’s why the children have to help move bricks].

But the children complain they get dirty before they get to class and the teachers complain about this, especially one teacher who beats them for being dirty or late.

The parents tell the children to go to school, but they don’t want to. The father says he’ll kick them out if they don’t go. But the son has no interest in school.

The teacher then complains to the parents about the children not being in school, and says he will kick them out of school, this is the last warning.

The children tell their mother that they have been kicked out because the school has not been paid, so she says she’ll go to the school. The girl is worried about being beaten as a punishment. The mother tells the father and he starts asking for explanations. They decide they’ll speak to the uncle to see

if he can rescue the situation. Mother says she wishes she'd never got married! The daughter suggests that they could go to a different school.

This group also drew a picture, which they presented. It showed that the first thing they are told when they get to school is 'carry bricks'. It also shows the old building (the children call it 'Titanic') with a broken floor, dust and no windows. They say they don't know what will happen in January because the foundations are supposed to be their new classroom when they become Grade 8, [but it seems unlikely it'll be built by January]. This is why they are being told to carry brick, even in the middle of classes, which disturbs their learning.

Map group

The school has made the ground good enough to start using it as a pitch, which is good. We like the block where this class is and the flag. The school has toilets now which is good because when the school first opened there weren't any.

Map group

The toilets are good. We use the pit to throw rubbish in after we've swept the class in the mornings. We don't like the view of the village, it is too near and disturbs our concentration. We like the head's house, the new foundations and the games ground.

Photography group

The pictures show friends (good). Also the old building with a bad floor and unplastered walls. The heads office is good. There is a photo of the external facilitator [I didn't hear the explanation of why!] There is a picture of the class teacher speaking to a pupil, which is good.

Photography group

Titanic is bad – the floor is bad, there is no board on the wall and no plaster. The new building still needs to be finished. The driveway to the school also needs to be made wider.

Photography group

The grounds look bad. They are too near the school and Mpika Basic pupils tease them for this. The latrines are not clean enough, we could get cholera or dysentery in the rainy season. [Carrying] bricks cause the problem of making you tired and dirty before class. Someone should bring aid to this place! The head's office is very clean and neat and we like her. This toilet has no door, there is nothing to keep the flies away. But the toilets for the staff look better. There is a photo of the teacher, we like the way he presents and the way he encourages us.

Individual drawings (photo elicitation groups tell about their drawings after they finished the photo elicitation activity).

The drawings show:

- I like reading but not fighting (boy).
- I like reading because that will help me pass. I also hate fighting (girl).
- I like reading, even if the teacher is not there, but others make a noise then (boy).
- I like reading to pass, and do not like carrying bricks (girl).
- I like reading and I don't like others eating in class (girl).
- I like writing and not the view from the school, the village is too near (girl).
- I like reading after school, going through the things we've done and doing homework. I hate working in the morning, carrying bricks (boy).

Drama – something that makes you happy to come to school

The play is about one of the teachers who presents well, who encourages and counsels them.

The teacher comes in and says “good morning, sit down”. He calls the register, tells them to do an exercise in their books. They go for break, the teacher marks their work. The children discuss during break about how committed the teacher is. After break the monitor distributes the marked books for the next lesson (maths).

Appendix 3: Feedback from children – what have you learned or experienced today?

Kabale

- I learned to draw a map of the school (girl).
- I normally like working individually but enjoyed sharing (girl).
- I was happy that everyone was participating, even those who can't draw had a chance (girl).
- Drawing a map is very difficult (girl).
- I can now differentiate what areas are liked and not liked by most children (through doing sharing) (boy).
- I saw the challenge of what we need to improve (girl).
- I have learned the skill of taking photos now (girl).
- I have seen a different type of camera, I had not seen a digital camera before (boy).
- Time – there was not enough, we wanted to carry on (girl). [Note, everyone did finish their tasks on time however, we did not run out of time for the tasks.]
- I had not expected to do this work (boy).
- Some communication is good, so is team work, co-operation (boy).
- I have been encouraged to keep the school clean (boy).

Nyanji

- I learned about the meaning of the flag (boy).
- I learned how to use a digital camera (girl).
- The flag has lots of meanings and you can see it from a long way away (boy).
- There is no roof or door on the toilet. I used to think the block windows were OK (boy).
- I discovered that there is no football ground for the school (girl).
- I learned that the bricks can be dangerous (boy).
- I was fond of playing on the hill but I realised it's dangerous because of the snakes and I will stop (boy).
- I learned that the sewage tank may overflow and contaminate food (boy).
- We should have water here, there is no tank here and we find it hard to get water in the surroundings (girl).
- I realised that using flowers as a fence makes the school beautiful (boy).
- People throw plastics into the school yard. I envy the way other schools look, this place doesn't look like a school (boy).

Mpika

- I learned things I never knew (girl).
- We should take care of the surroundings and clean the toilets, I learned this from my friends when we were discussing (boy).
- I learned how to draw (girl).
- I learned that co-operation is good. By working together we can make things better/clean (boy).
- I learned how to exercise my freedoms, by saying the things I don't like and like (girl).
- I learned how to operate a camera (boy).

Chitulika

- I learned to use a digital camera and now know how to take photos (boy).
- I learned to draw and how to be creative (girl).
- I learned how to comment on the good and bad things in school (boy).
- I learned about the good things the teachers do for us (girl).
- I learned what is right and what is not right (boy).
- I learned that we should encourage people to clean the toilet as everyone uses it (boy).
- I learned how to do a map of the school (girl).
- I learned more about the bad things like the unfinished block (boy).
- I learned about cleaning (girl).
- I learned about photographing (boy).
- I learned what free education really means, but we and the community still have to do things (boy).
- I learned that teachers should come for meetings to see what is happening with the children and parents should help (boy)
- We should construct the school (boy).
- Parents should pay to finish the building (girl).
- We want to move the houses from the school grounds (boy).
- The teacher's house is nice – someone should build more like it and make the school more beautiful (boy).
- The old building is no good in the rainy season (girl).
- We thank the school for building toilets, we never used to have any (girl).
- But we should maintain them or we'll get diseases (girl).
- I learned to draw. I never had ideas before, but today I just thought of an idea and put it on the paper (boy).
- I learned how to do a play, how to create characters, etc (boy).
- We should maintain the grounds – there are too many stones and pot holes (boy).
- I learned how to make a school plan (boy).
- I say thanks for being able to use a camera (boy).

- I learned how things are not good enough, though I used to think it was beautiful (girl).
- I never thought I'd have the chance to use a camera or do drawing and am thankful (boy).
- Thanks for coming all the way to do this activity (girl).
- I didn't know I would be doing this today! (boy).