16. What is a 'bad' life?

INTRODUCTION

Talk to the children about the trend in some groups to use words that sound 'bad' to mean the opposite. So if something is 'wicked' it is really exciting, interesting and good fun. The word 'sick' has been used in a similar way to mean 'excellent' or 'very impressive'. But some people are called 'bad' or 'wicked' when they really have done terrible things and some people lead 'bad' lives through no fault of their own.

Ask the children for their ideas about bad experiences and how they are caused, e.g., by others, by themselves, by natural disaster, by accident.

ACTIVITY

Show a series of pictures on the whiteboard and ask the group to shout out 'bad' if the picture shows someone leading a terrible life through no fault of their own, and 'wicked' if they are a person who has done terrible things. Use a mix of pictures from Google images, for example of, on the one hand: Hitler, The Joker (from Batman), Captain Hook (Peter Pan), The Wicked Witch of the West (from the Wizard of Oz), Satan; and on the other hand: a child with chickenpox, a slave in chains, a homeless person or someone living in poverty, child refugees, starving children, a victim of war, a victim of terrorism, a person suffering from depression, an injured animal.

Explain that some of the images were of real people, some of fictional characters and one (Satan) of a character that some people believe to be real. Ask children for their ideas about 'evil':

- What does 'bad' mean'?
- Is 'evil' real?
- What are the worst 'evils' of our world?
- Are some people completely 'evil'?
- How does 'evil' start?
- Why is there still 'evil' in the world?

Listen to their answers and explain that the word 'evil' gets used and misused in all sorts of ways; this may be dangerous if someone is trying to make someone out to be 'less than human'. Can they think of examples? What might the dangers be of portraying a person as 'less than human'? What might happen to their 'human rights'?

ACTIVITY

Explain the idea of 'humanity' as involving:

- good actions and helpful practices;
- a mutually supportive society / community;
- supportive institutions and good government.

Encourage the children to work in twos or threes to consider how people might be helped to:

- have a decent length of life;
- have more freedom;
- have more power;
- have more self-respect;
- show more respect for others;
- have good relationships;
- enjoy life.

Encourage the children to consider (a) what *values* [e.g., love, friendship, loyalty, trust, respect] and (b) what *science and technology* [e.g., medical advances, ways of involving people in local and national decision-making, inventions that take pain. danger or drudgery out of work] might be most helpful.

After some minutes ask the children for their reflections.

CONCLUSIONS

Remind the children of the idea of 'the bad life', and ask them to reflect on what they might do to help people achieve improvements in their life.