

# Young Voices

Young people's  
views of inclusive  
education



the  
**atlas**  
alliance

global support to  
disabled people





# Young Voices

Young people's  
views of inclusive  
education



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**First published:** September 2008

This booklet was compiled by Ingrid Lewis. The accompanying DVD was filmed and edited by Åse Drivenes.

This booklet is also available online from the websites of the Atlas Alliance ([www.atlas-alliansen.no](http://www.atlas-alliansen.no)) and the Enabling Education Network ([www.eenet.org.uk](http://www.eenet.org.uk)). A Kiswahili translation is available.

Copies of the DVD are available from EENET, c/o ESI, School of Education, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL, UK.  
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Cover photo by Ingrid Lewis.

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# Acknowledgements

This book would not have been possible without the enthusiasm, dedication and wisdom of the students who took part in the **Young Voices** project. We cannot thank them enough for sharing with us – and the rest of the world – their insights and feelings about their education. We hope they will continue to speak out about how to make education more inclusive for everyone. Thanks also go to the parents and guardians of Ally Iddi and Omari Chota for making us welcome in their homes.

We would like to thank the staff from Agururu Primary School and Rock High School in Tororo, Uganda and Bigwa Folk Development College (FDC) in Morogoro, Tanzania, for supporting the project and giving their students the opportunity to participate.

In Tanzania we also wish to thank Tanzania Association of Mentally Handicapped (TAMH), Evena Massae, Pulcheria Ndamgoba, Abdallah Mng'obwa, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, and the Ministry of Community Development, Gender and Children. In Uganda our thanks go to Moses Moiza, Simon Obbo, the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development, including the Department of Disability and Elderly, and the Tororo District administration and education staff.

Finally, we are grateful to the Atlas Alliance and Operation Days Work for funding **Young Voices**.

**Ingrid Lewis, project facilitator**  
**Åse Drivenes, film-maker**

# Introduction

## Inclusive education

Around the world, many young people are not able to go to school because of poverty and discrimination. They may be discriminated against, for example, because they are disabled, girls, refugees, working children, or from a certain ethnic, religious or language group. Even when young people go to school, many struggle to join in the lessons and leave school without learning much.

Inclusive education involves changing many things within a school, or across a country's education system, so that all young people feel welcome in, gain access to, and benefit from education – even if they have previously been left out.

Many people think inclusive education is only about making schools more physically accessible for students with disabilities. But inclusion is more complicated than that. It involves all parts of young people's education experiences, and requires a continuous process of making big and small changes. These changes should help more young people to attend school, to participate in learning and social activities, and to achieve to the best of their abilities.

For education to become more inclusive, there have to be changes to people's attitudes; their practices; the environment; local, national and international policies; and the way that resources are distributed and used.

# The Young Voices project

## Why did we do the project?

Since 2003, the Atlas Alliance, through the Norwegian Association of Disabled (NAD) and the Norwegian Association for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (NFU), has been supporting inclusion projects for young people in Malawi, Uganda, mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar. These projects have been evaluated by adults, but the views of the young people involved have not always been recorded in detail. Therefore, the **Young Voices** project asked Tanzanian and Ugandan young people with and without disabilities to talk about their experiences of inclusive education. What makes them feel included in, or excluded from, education?

The main aim of the **Young Voices** project was to create a book and a film, showcasing the views and photography of these young people. But we hope that it will also encourage other adults and young people to think about what makes their schools inclusive, to carry out similar projects, and to work together to solve any problems, so that their schools become more inclusive for everyone.



# What activities did we do during the project?

Not every student likes writing, or speaking in front of a large group, or being interviewed by adults. So the **Young Voices** project used a range of different activities, to allow each student to find a way of communicating that made them feel comfortable.

## Photography

We showed the students photographs taken in other schools and communities in Africa and Asia. They discussed these photographs and decided which ones they liked or disliked, which ones looked happy or sad, and which ones looked the same or different from their own experience of education/school/community. Using photographs to start a discussion like this is called 'photo elicitation'. We then trained the students to use simple digital cameras.

They took photographs around their school of places that they liked/disliked, or that they found welcoming/unwelcoming. We used a portable printer to print the photographs. The students then made posters to display their photographs. Some of them wrote words, drew pictures, or stuck flowers on their posters to make them bright and attractive. See page 9 for an example.

We asked the students to tell us about their photographs – sometimes in one-to-one interviews, or in small groups, or by presenting their posters to everyone in the room.



Ally and Aron practise using a camera, Bigwa FDC

## Drawing

We asked students to draw pictures. In Uganda they drew pictures of what made them happy and unhappy at school. In Tanzania they drew a simple cartoon strip of three pictures showing: “what I used to do before I came to this college; what I like doing most at college; and what I hope to do when I leave the college”.

## Drama

In Tanzania the students made some short role plays about: a good teacher, a bad teacher, and a bad student.

## Discussions

In Tanzania the students also held a discussion about “what role do teachers, parents and students have in ensuring that everyone gets a quality inclusive education?”.

## Filming

All of these activities were filmed. The film, which accompanies this book, shows the students working on the **Young Voices** project, studying in their classes, playing with friends, and being interviewed.

## Who participated?

In total 55 students took part:

- Rock High School, Tororo, Uganda – 25 students, 15 female and 10 male.
- Agururu Primary School, Tororo, Uganda – 16 students, 7 female and 9 male.
- Bigwa FDC, Morogoro, Tanzania – 14 students, 8 female and 6 male.

In each school there was a mix of students with and without disabilities, and a mix of girls and boys. This included students who had physical or intellectual disabilities, and those who were blind or visually impaired or deaf.

## The schools

All of the schools are striving to be inclusive. Agururu Primary School opened in 1980. In 1996 a special unit for children with disabilities was opened within the school. However, the school is now committed to

working towards inclusive education, so that children with and without disabilities can learn together. It now has 718 pupils, of whom 174 have disabilities.

Rock High School is an equal opportunity post-primary school. In 2006 the Operation Days Work youth project trained the teachers in inclusive education. Since then, both teachers and students have worked to make the school inclusive for all learners. The school has 180 students with disabilities out of a total of 2,871.

Bigwa FDC offers vocational education to students with and without disabilities from rural areas, many of whom have not completed primary or secondary school. It also enables students to continue with some academic studies. The college promotes student-centred learning and encourages students to learn from and support each other throughout their studies and leisure time.



Participants from Bigwa FDC



Participants from Agururu Primary School



Participants from Rock High School

## What were the successes and challenges of the project?

The students took excellent photographs and created great drawings. They also discussed a very wide range of inclusive education issues, and made some important observations and recommendations.

Some of the students were very shy at the start of the project. The project only lasted about five days in each school. But even during this short time, some of the shy students became much more confident at expressing their ideas and feelings.

The project showed the teachers that students can be very good at discussing matters that affect their inclusion in education. It also reminded the adults just how important it is to listen to the views of young people in relation to education.



An example of a photo poster from Agururu Primary School

Because the project was very short, there was not enough time for every student who participated to become confident and relaxed while doing these new activities and talking to strangers. Some of them, therefore, may not have told us as much as they would have liked.

Language was also a challenge, particularly in Agururu Primary School. At Agururu, students speak seven different 'mother tongue' languages, and translators for all of these languages were not available to us during the project. All lessons in the school are conducted in English, so the students did the project in English. But they found it quite difficult to find the right words, especially when they were trying to talk about 'new' or different ideas and feelings related to inclusion and exclusion.

## How have we organised what the students said?

The students who participated in the **Young Voices** project took almost 200 photographs and created many drawings. They spoke and wrote a lot about their views of inclusion and exclusion in education. Unfortunately we cannot publish everything here. So, we have mainly selected those photographs and drawings that students talked about in detail. We have also had to choose images that will reproduce clearly in a book.

The images and quotations have been presented in five sections – environment, policy, practices, resources and attitudes. These are five very important areas where students feel change needs to happen if education is to become more inclusive for everyone.

# Students' views on inclusive education

## Environment

The environment in and around a school can really affect whether young people are able to attend, or actually want to go to school. The students' photographs show us the wide range of environmental issues that are important to them.

These issues include: the condition of classrooms; the availability of quiet places to read or meet friends; whether they can move around the school easily; and whether toilets are accessible and clean.

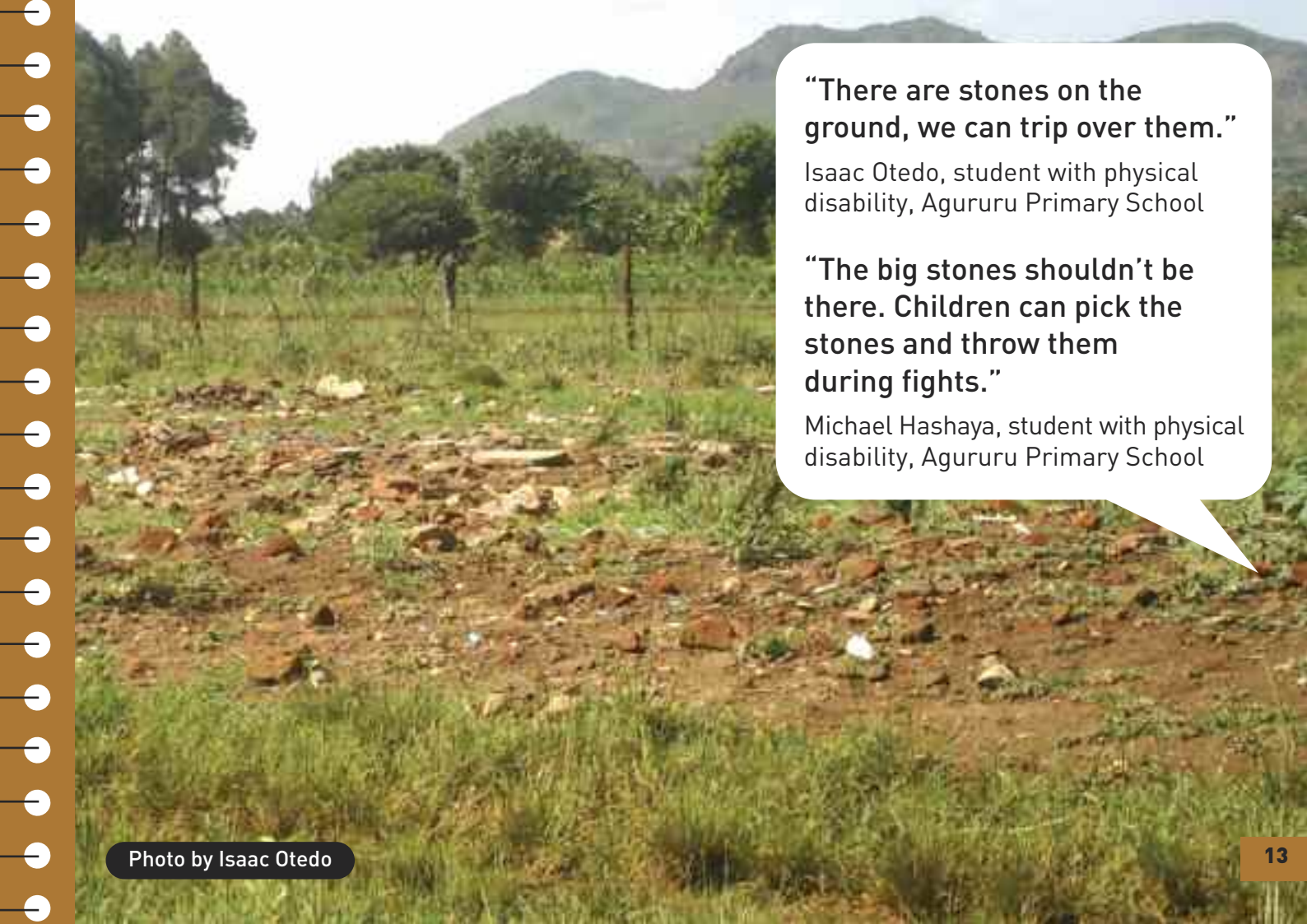
What the students' photographs show very clearly is that everyone has their own needs and views regarding what makes an environment welcoming and accessible.

**“I like this place. It’s cool here. It’s where we meet friends and talk. It’s a good place to relax and rest.”**

Ally Iddi, student with intellectual disability, Bigwa FDC





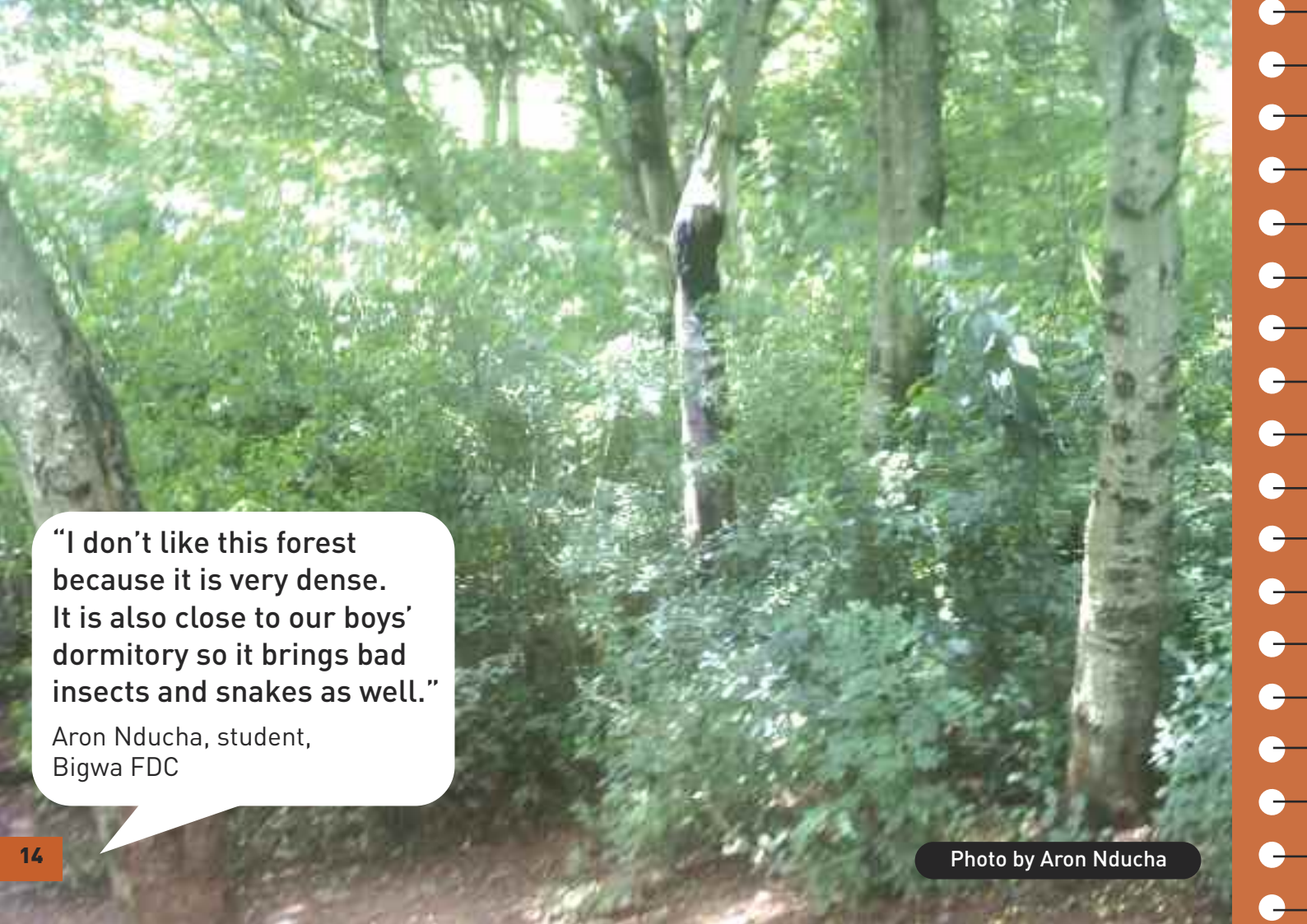


**“There are stones on the ground, we can trip over them.”**

Isaac Otedo, student with physical disability, Agururu Primary School

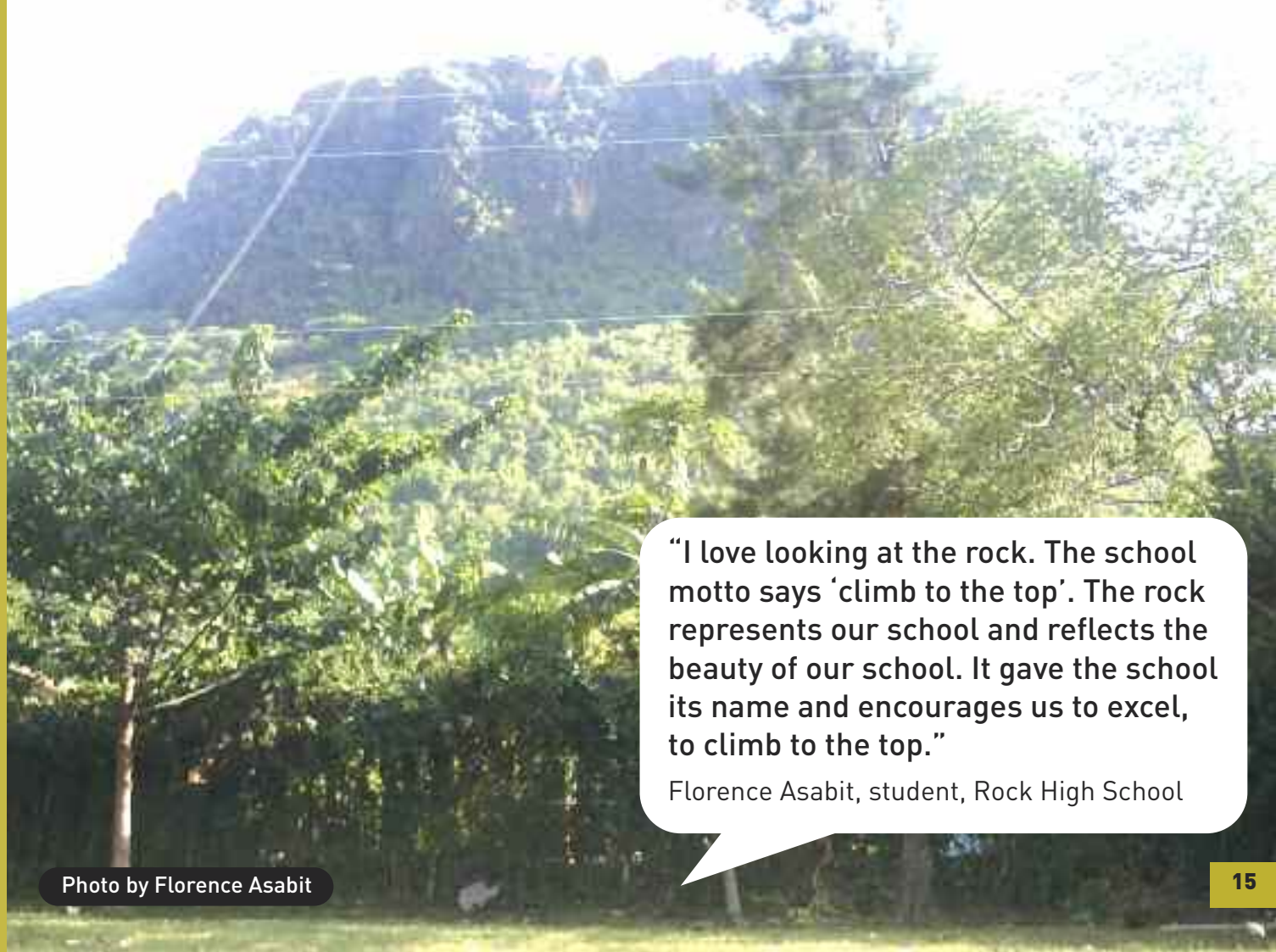
**“The big stones shouldn’t be there. Children can pick the stones and throw them during fights.”**

Michael Hashaya, student with physical disability, Agururu Primary School

A photograph of a dense forest with many trees and thick undergrowth. The trees are mostly deciduous with green leaves. The ground is covered in brown leaves and dirt. The forest appears very thick and overgrown.

**“I don’t like this forest because it is very dense. It is also close to our boys’ dormitory so it brings bad insects and snakes as well.”**

Aron Nducha, student,  
Bigwa FDC



**“I love looking at the rock. The school motto says ‘climb to the top’. The rock represents our school and reflects the beauty of our school. It gave the school its name and encourages us to excel, to climb to the top.”**


Florence Asabit, student, Rock High School

Photo by Florence Asabit



**“Classrooms are congested. The school admits a high number of students... [Here] people are working... they are improving our standards in school. They are building new classrooms. The building will also have halls and another library.”**

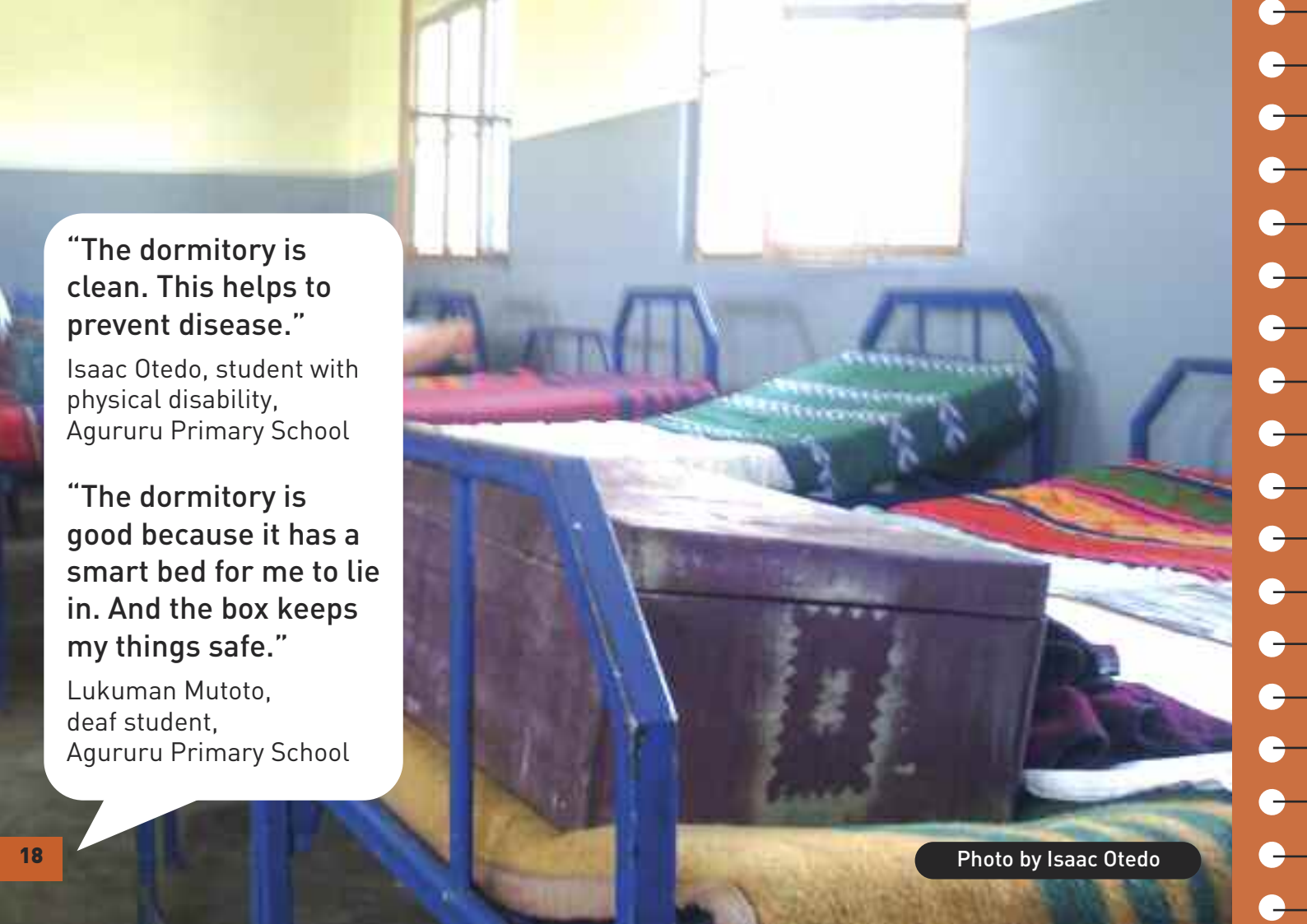
**William Osinde, student,  
Rock High School**



**“This new building looks good. It is the most beautiful block in the whole school. I feel good when I am in this block. But I am glad my classroom is on the ground floor. I couldn’t manage if I was put on the upper floor.”**

Irene Athieno, student with physical disability, Rock High School

Photo by Irene Athieno

A photograph of a dormitory room. In the foreground, a blue metal bed frame is visible, with a purple and white patterned box on it. In the background, several other beds with colorful blankets (red, green, and yellow) are arranged. A window with a white frame is visible on the wall. The room appears clean and well-lit.

**“The dormitory is clean. This helps to prevent disease.”**

Isaac Otedo, student with physical disability,  
Agururu Primary School

**“The dormitory is good because it has a smart bed for me to lie in. And the box keeps my things safe.”**

Lukiman Mutoto,  
deaf student,  
Agururu Primary School



**“I like this photo of the classroom because it shows a good environment and in there we learn different things.”**

Mwajuma Tepe Tepe,  
student with visual  
impairment, Bigwa FDC

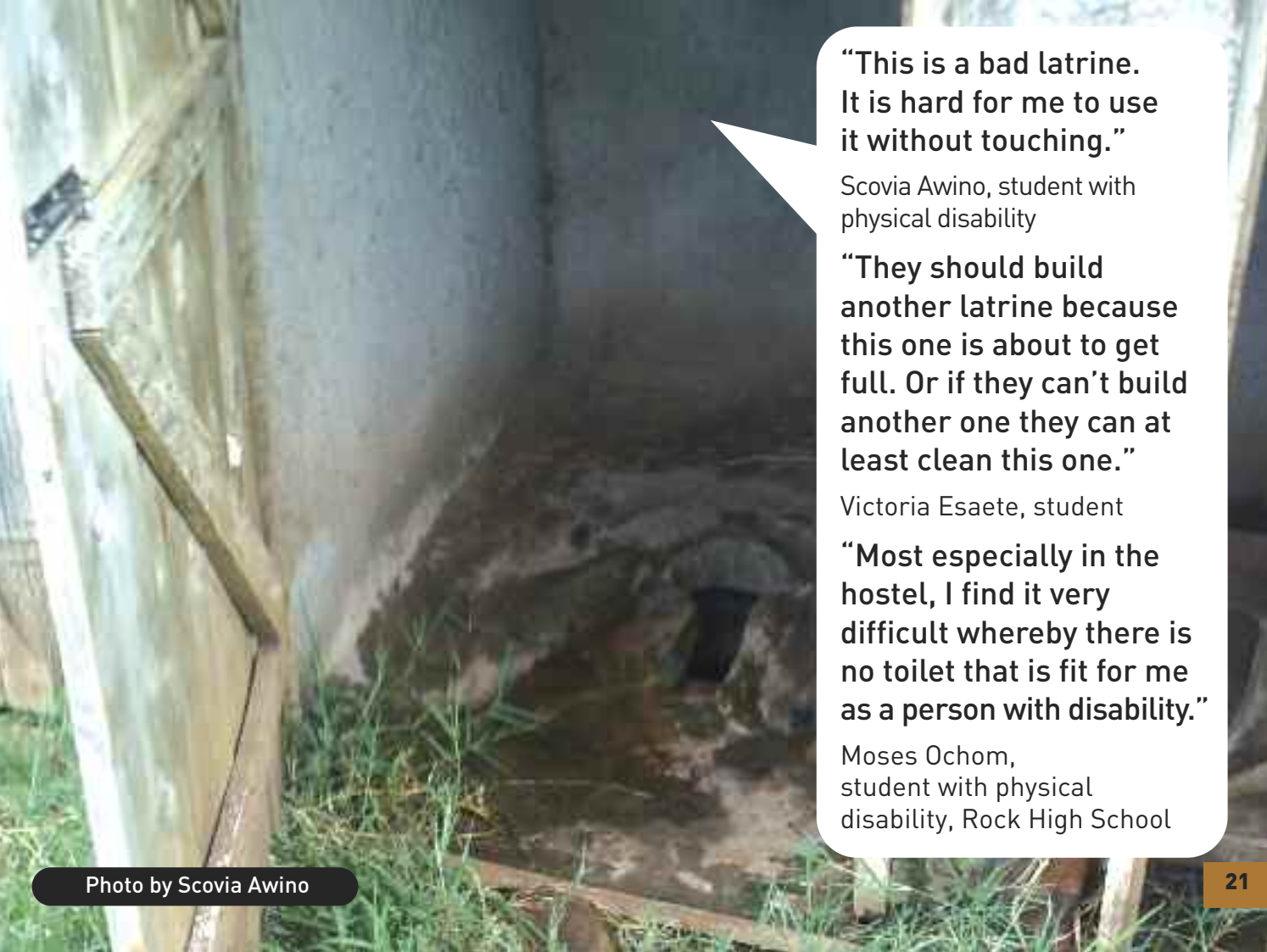
Photo by Mwajuma Tepe Tepe



**“This is good. There is a bathroom here for those with physical disabilities who cannot access the other bathrooms.”**

Winy Auma, deaf student,  
Agururu Primary School





**“This is a bad latrine. It is hard for me to use it without touching.”**

Scovia Awino, student with physical disability

**“They should build another latrine because this one is about to get full. Or if they can’t build another one they can at least clean this one.”**

Victoria Esaete, student

**“Most especially in the hostel, I find it very difficult whereby there is no toilet that is fit for me as a person with disability.”**

Moses Ochom, student with physical disability, Rock High School

## Policy

The rules that govern a school or education system can influence people's attitudes and behaviour. This in turn can either help or hinder students' inclusion.

We did not specifically ask students to discuss education policies, but their opinions offer us suggestions about what does or does not make a good inclusive education policy.

They mentioned a wide range of issues that education policy-makers need to consider, from religion and language to disability and timetabling.

**"In this school, every religion is recognised and allowed to worship freely. That makes me feel included."**

Emmanuel Papaok, student with physical disability, Rock High School

**"We all pay equal fees regardless of the language one speaks or the country one is from. In this school every child is welcomed regardless of their nationality."**

John Ojiro, student, Rock High School

**"I feel included in this school because there is freedom of expression, speech and movement."**

Juliana Atwine, student, Rock High School

**“I feel not included in that I am not in favour of staying in school from 6am to 7pm. It makes me hate school since I am not given any time for leisure.”**

Alex Owori, student, Rock High School

**“In class, I go and learn with my friends properly and we are mixed, not separated like ‘you’re disabled sit here and those ones sit here’. No, we are mixed and that makes me happy.”**

Isaac Otedo, student with physical disability, Agururu Primary School

**“There are too many subjects and this makes me feel not included.”**

Hellen Nalubanga, student, Rock High School

## Practices

The way things are done in school can really affect whether students are included in the learning process. The students who took part in the **Young Voices** project told us about different approaches to teaching and learning that can help them to receive a better quality education.

They mentioned the importance of encouraging students to help each other with academic and social activities, and not always

relying on teachers and other adults. The students also talked about their views on being actively involved in lessons, not just listening passively to a lecture by the teacher.

And they highlighted how essential it is to have leisure time and friends in school – this can have a big impact on a student’s sense of inclusion as well as on their educational achievements.



Drawing by William Osinde, Rock High School

**“We need to be co-operative and ask classmates for help. We shouldn’t just wait for the teacher – our friends can explain things to us as well.”**

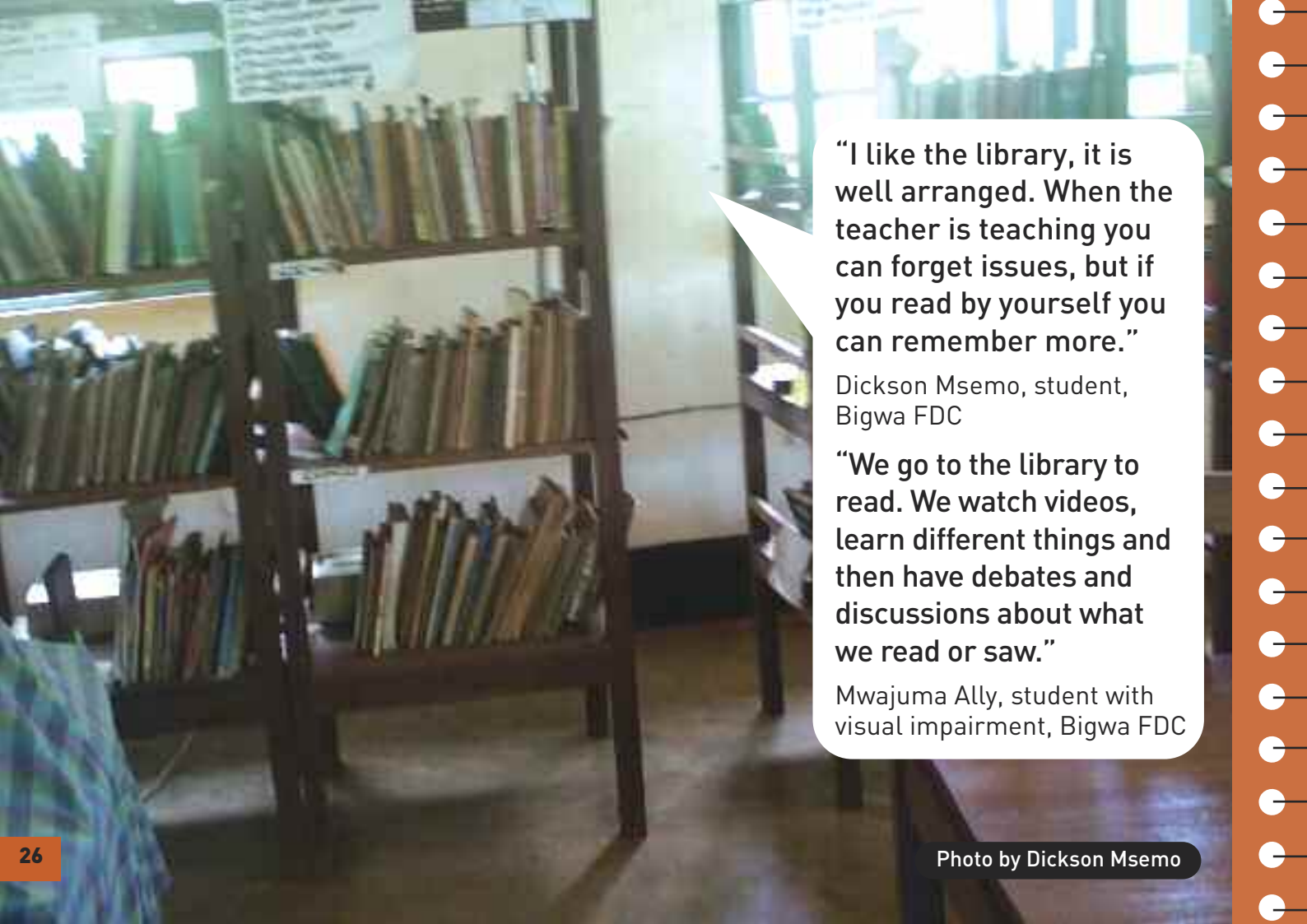
Mwajuma Tepe Tepe, student with visual impairment, Bigwa FDC

**“We need to ask questions of each other. In class, if there is no teacher, we have to help each other.”**

Witness Ngimbuch, student, Bigwa FDC

**“Good numbers of students are at school. We can form a good number of discussion groups to discuss our work.”**

James Okello, student, Rock High School

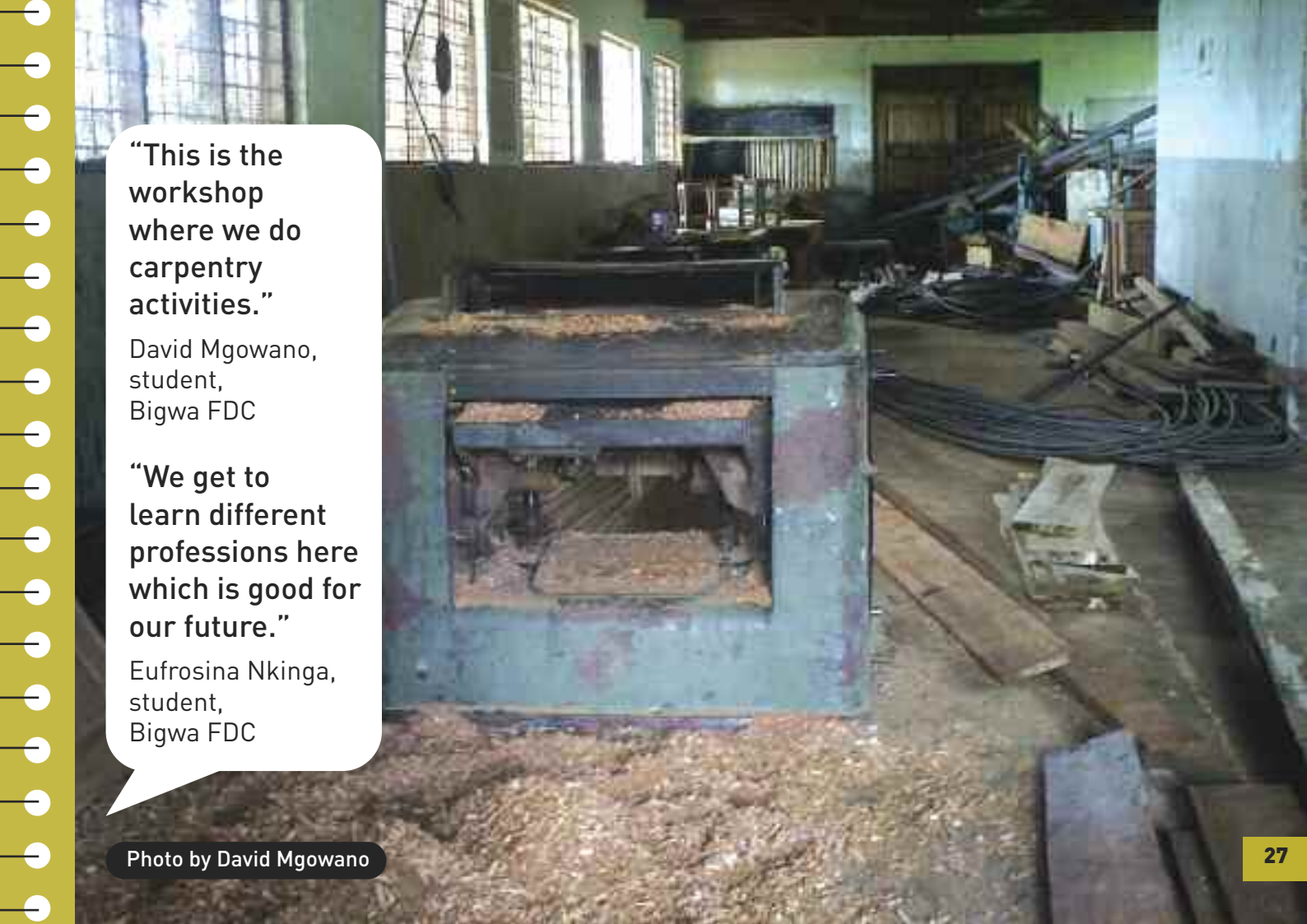


**“I like the library, it is well arranged. When the teacher is teaching you can forget issues, but if you read by yourself you can remember more.”**

Dickson Msemo, student,  
Bigwa FDC

**“We go to the library to read. We watch videos, learn different things and then have debates and discussions about what we read or saw.”**

Mwajuma Ally, student with  
visual impairment, Bigwa FDC



**“This is the workshop where we do carpentry activities.”**

David Mgowano,  
student,  
Bigwa FDC

**“We get to learn different professions here which is good for our future.”**

Eufrosina Nkinga,  
student,  
Bigwa FDC

Photo by David Mgowano



“The science lab is a place where they make us do things practically. Many things are theory, but if we have a chance to do practicals it helps us learn how to make things that we use in society today.”

Alex Owori, student,  
Rock High School



**“We get news from the TV in the library. When I’m watching I can be well informed about what’s going on around the world.”**


Omari Chota, student with intellectual disability, Bigwa FDC

Photo by Omari Chota



**“We sometimes use this place for discussion groups, for student debates. For example, we might debate, ‘is earning money better than getting education or vice versa?’. Those who say education is better are winning the debate so far.”**

**Tausi Saidi, student, Bigwa FDC**



“This is the door for a room where our fellow student who passed away was living. This reminds me of her whenever I see this door.”

Mariam Abdallah,  
student with visual  
impairment,  
Bigwa FDC

Photo by Mariam Abdallah

**“Participating in activities like singing and dancing makes me feel I’m included.”**

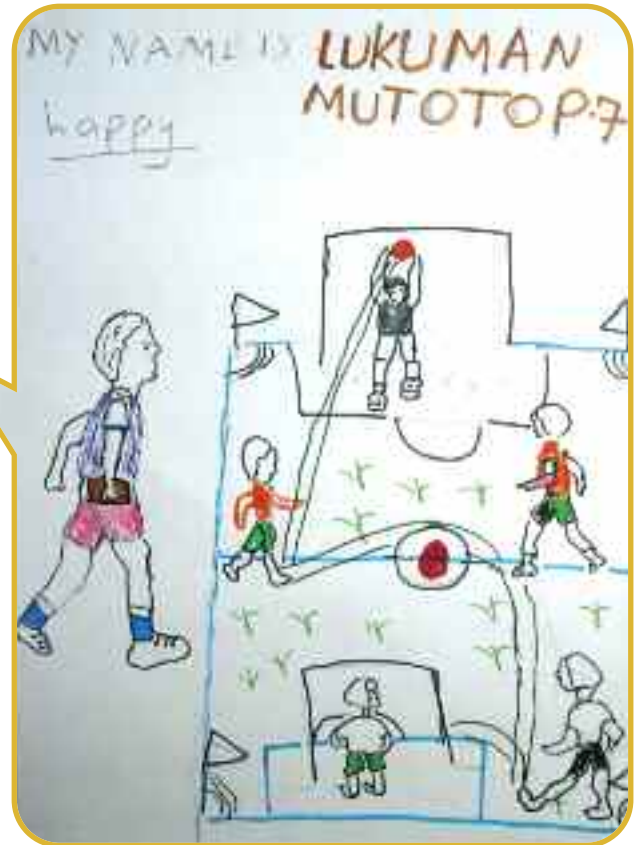
Scovia Awino, student with physical disability,  
Rock High School

**“Many friends makes me feel included in this school because they help me when I am faced with hard tasks.”**

Rachael Nadunga, student, Rock High School



Playing cricket, Agururu Primary School.  
Photo by Claire Nagami



Drawing by Lukuman Mutoto, deaf student,  
Agururu Primary School

## Resources

The availability of resources can greatly affect students' presence, participation and achievement in education.

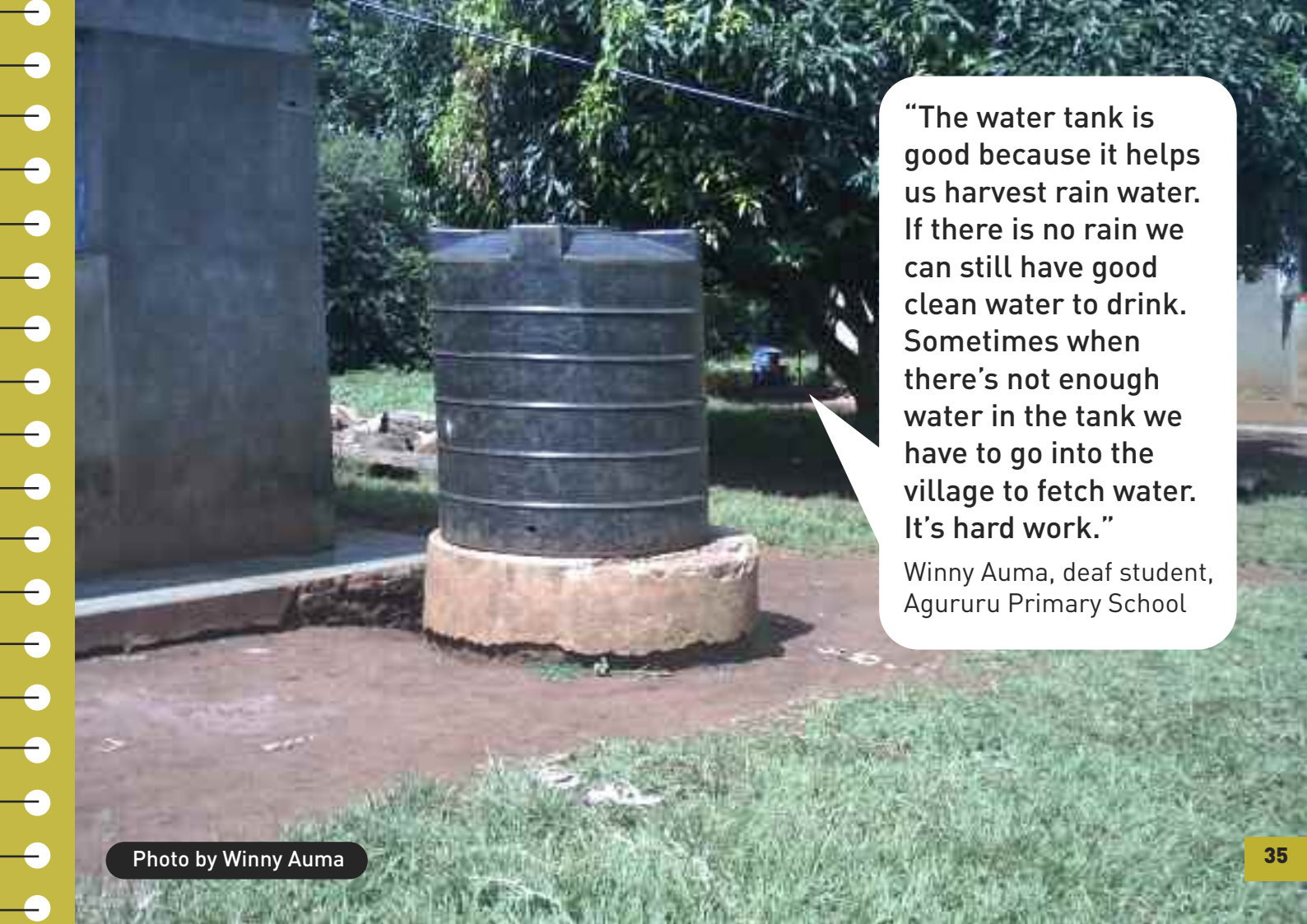
The students who participated in the **Young Voices** project highlighted how important access to food and water are to them, if they are to be included in education.

They talked about these much more than they talked about traditional educational resources such as books, desks or access ramps.



“This tap provides easy access to water and there is good drainage here. This is good because we can get water in a very orderly manner. It’s good to have drainage because the water that flows through it helps the banana plantation.”

Lukuman Mutoto,  
deaf student,  
Agururu Primary School



**“The water tank is good because it helps us harvest rain water. If there is no rain we can still have good clean water to drink. Sometimes when there’s not enough water in the tank we have to go into the village to fetch water. It’s hard work.”**

Winy Auma, deaf student,  
Agururu Primary School



Drawing by Pauline Awori

**“I feel included if I miss food [because there is not enough for everyone] and I go to one of my teachers and he/she gives me money to go and buy my own food, and then I feel loved in school. I feel not included when I miss lunch and the teacher in charge tells me ‘no problem, you are fat so there is no need for you to eat’.”**

Pauline Awori, student,  
Rock High School

**“Sometimes there is a poorer diet at school than at home. There is difficulty getting food and water because the line will be long.”**

Mary Amoding, student,  
Rock High School





**“This porridge –  
it’s fake, no  
sugar!”**

Ismail Etyang,  
blind student,  
Agururu Primary  
School

Photo by Ismail Etyang



“I took this photo because it shows lack of hygiene and sanitation. It shows that the food cooked is not healthy and can cause various diseases and diahorrea. A student can be affected in class because every time he/she is in and out of class because of diarrhoea they miss lessons, leading to failure and punishments if found outside.”

Juliana Atwine, student,  
Rock High School

“What makes me to feel not included in this school is because my parents are poor, they can’t provide me with enough books. This makes my life difficult in the school.

They also can’t buy me everything which I am supposed to have like clothes. Being in school without books and pens also makes me feel not included because teachers used to send me out because I don’t have books to write in.”

Jackline Auma, student, Rock High School

“I am unhappy when I see children who are poor”

Blantina Nyachwo, deaf student,  
Agururu Primary School



Drawing by Blantina Nyachwo

## Attitudes

The attitudes of other people can either support or discourage students from attending school.

The students who participated in the **Young Voices** project said that they need their parents to encourage and support them to get an education.

They explained that their own attitudes, and those of fellow students, can affect their participation and achievement in education.

The attitudes of teachers, head teachers and other school staff were also mentioned by the students as being very important for helping them to join in and benefit from education to the best of their ability.

John Ojiro from Rock High School drew this picture (right) about how students' attitudes can make other students feel unwelcome in school:

### Unhappy when isolated and stigmatised

"God why?!! What do I do? Even my friends are rebelling against me!!"

"Look at that stupid Form One. How can he call me! Do I have time to associate with him?"



**“If a parent has a child with a disability, they ought to take him/her to school, because some of them keep their children at home. But they should take them to school.”**

Tausi Saidi, student, Bigwa FDC

**“Parents have to bring a letter and say ‘my child would like to study vocational training’.”**

Omari Chota, student with intellectual disability, Bigwa FDC

**“As a person with a disability I also need a good future whereby I can take care of my family in future. In this world of ours it needs at least a person to have gone to school and be seen as a person. And I have to learn how to co-operate with others in different ways, like the danger of not being co-operative in society, school and community at large.”**

Moses Ochom, student with physical disability, Rock High School

**“We should work hard as students. We should try to get the education we came here for.”**

Teresia Kisawani,  
student with intellectual  
disability, Bigwa FDC

**“We have people with special requirements here. If we see someone with problems we have to be tolerant and help them – we are not all the same.”**

Dickson Msemo, student, Bigwa FDC

**“The teacher has to love his students.”**

Ally Iddi, student with intellectual disability, Bigwa FDC

**“In my former school both pupils and teachers used to laugh at me when I failed to say something, since I couldn't pronounce words properly and they wouldn't let me talk. But in this school if students laugh at me, teachers stop them and they ask forgiveness.”**

Pauline Awori, student, Rock High School

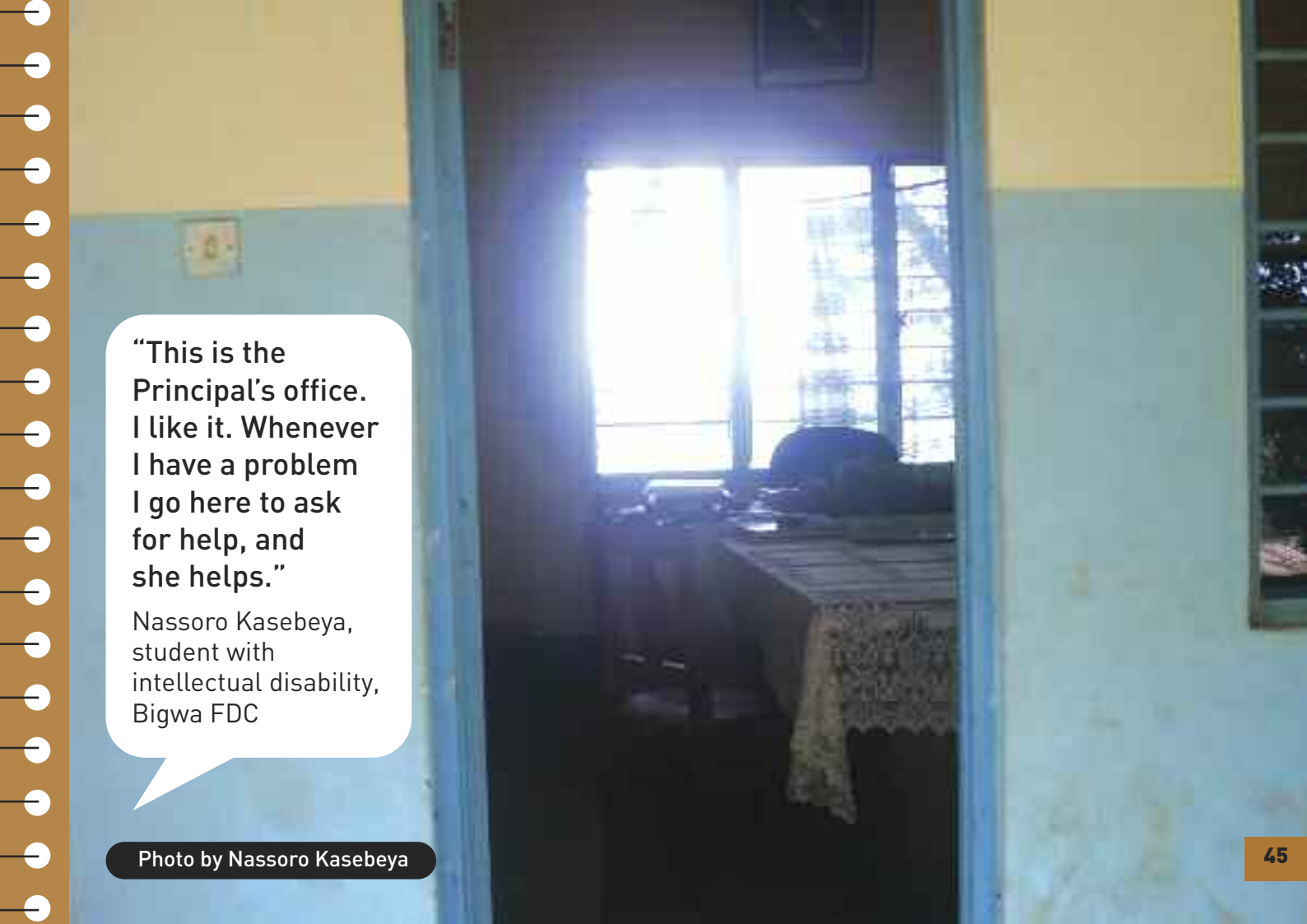
**“I am given attention, especially when it comes to asking questions that I don't know [the answer to]. They [the teachers] answer it without grumbling.”**

Alex Owori, student, Rock High School

**“A good teacher recognises that there are students with special needs and is ready to assist them.”**

Dickson Msemo, student, Bigwa FDC





**“This is the  
Principal’s office.  
I like it. Whenever  
I have a problem  
I go here to ask  
for help, and  
she helps.”**

Nassoro Kasebeya,  
student with  
intellectual disability,  
Bigwa FDC

Photo by Nassoro Kasebeya

# Some final thoughts...

**“We need to love each other.”**

Aron Nducha, student, Bigwa FDC

**“To me inclusion means being part of something... being part of different activities and societies like football, education, music, dance and drama.”**

Juliana Atwine, student,  
Rock High School

**“[Being in an inclusive school] makes us learn how we can help each other and also understand that education is for everybody...”**

Pauline Awori, student,  
Rock High School

**“We need to listen if we are going to understand...”**

Angel Kejo, student, Bigwa FDC



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## Young people's views of inclusive education

### **The Atlas Alliance**

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“This booklet of students’ photographs, drawings and opinions illustrates efforts to make inclusive education really happen. Issues raised by the young people range from policy, attitudes and behaviour, to resource allocation and environmental issues.

The booklet showed me the need for collective responsibility and action from education policy-makers, managers, administrators, teachers, parents, caregivers and students in changing the perceptions of educational needs for children with and without disabilities.”

Moses Moiza, Acting Senior Community Development Officer – Elderly and Disability, Tororo, Uganda

