

# WORLD COMICS FINLAND



BIGIZWE NA Jérémie R. APDH MUYINGA

## HOW TO MAKE WALLPOSTER COMICS

a manual by Leif Packalen

# WORLD COMICS FINLAND

World Comics Finland was founded by comics artists and aid activists in 1997. Its main areas of interests are:

- local comics as an information tool in development and human rights work
- local comics as a mirror of culture
- comics as a medium for self-expression in small and alternative groups

World Comics Finland arranges comics workshops, lectures, exhibitions, courses, etc., in Finland and abroad. We have worked with local organisations in Tanzania, Kenya, Burundi, Mozambique, Benin, Togo, Morocco, Lebanon and India.

We have also worked in the Netherlands, Sweden, UK, Estonia, and Latvia. We have also invited comics artists from several countries to Finland and presented their work there.

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## Why use comics?

You can **dramatise** your message.

You can use both **images and text**, and add effects.

You can **show**, rather than explain.

You can use **local language** and **humour**.

Comics are **low-tech** compared to video.

Comics can take up **sensitive** issues in a gentle way.

Comics are **stories**, and everybody likes a good story.

Local comics generate **attention, debate, and easy recall**

because they have credibility in the community.




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*Publication details: Copyright: Manuscript, illustrations and graphic design, Leif Packalen, February 2014 (enlarged version from manual, published in May 2010), Helsinki. The samples are from wallposter comics made at workshops tutored by World Comics Finland in different countries in Africa, India, the Middle East, and Europe. The copyrights of these remain with the original creators. You are allowed to download, print and use this manual in workshops and similar events, but you are not allowed to change the contents in any way. No reproduction of any material from this publication is allowed unless there is a written agreement with World Comics Finland.*

*Cover: A story about the inheritance rights of women in Burundi by Jeremie R. of APDH, Burundi.*

Wallposter comics are inexpensively produced local stories by local NGOs. These stories, which are pasted up on walls and similar places get attention and create debate in the communities.



The wallposters are either photocopied or printed in simple black and white.

This manual is a guide on how to make wallposter comics.

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To draw well is not the most important thing to make a good wallposter comic.

The important thing is to have a **good story**, with interesting and engaging characters which the readers can easily identify with.



# The wallposter comic

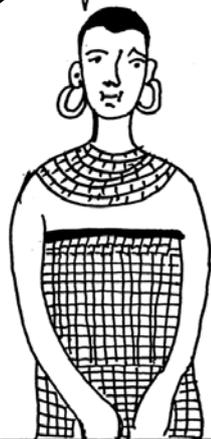
Heading and title area

panels

## ELIMU NA MSICHANA

MAMA, NA MIMI  
NINGEPENDA  
KWENDA  
SHULE.

NITAJARIBU  
KUONGEA NA  
BABA YAKO...



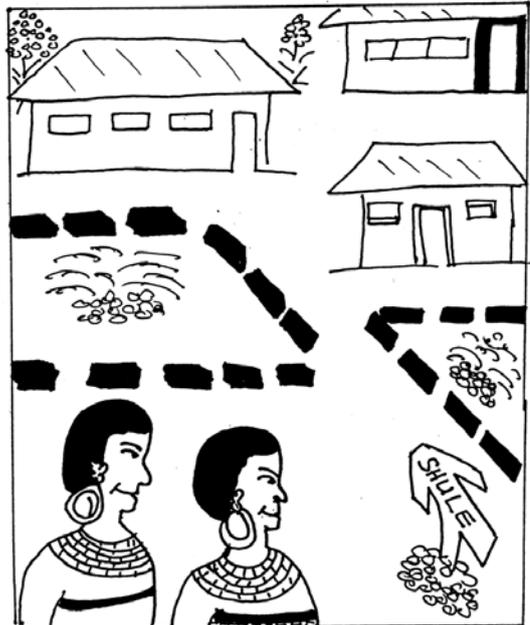
NANA ATAANZA  
SHULE, LAKINI  
ARUH USIWE KWAA  
WAZI LETU LA  
ASILI.

ASANTE SANA,  
NANA ATAFURAHII  
SANA.



MWENZIO  
NITAANZA SHULE  
WIKI IJAYO

NA MIMI  
NITAWAOMBA  
WAZAZI WANGU.



BY KATUNZI - HAKIELIMU

Signature, or-  
ganisation and  
possibly sponsors'  
credits.

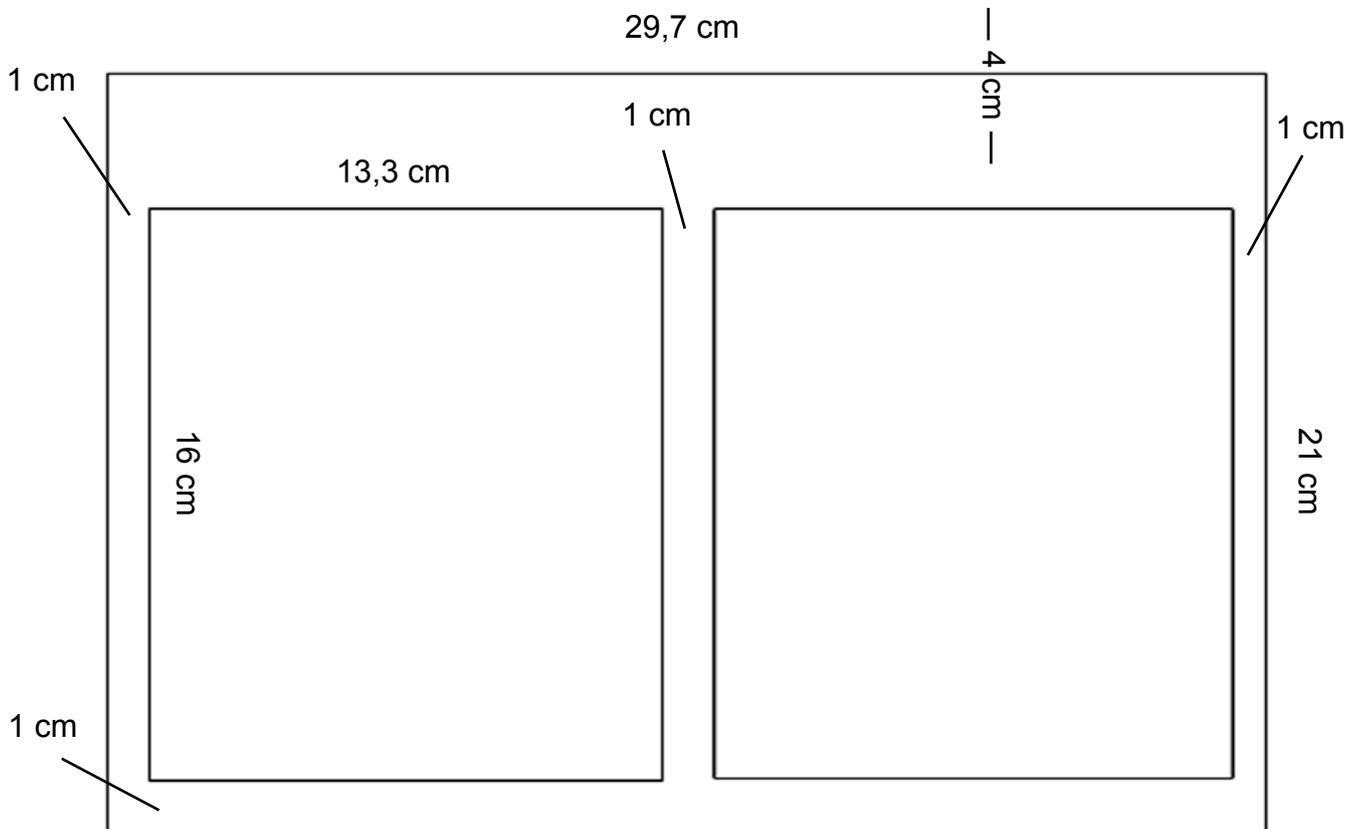
The wallposter comic has four panels. Because it is mostly read outdoors it cannot have too many small details. It must look inviting for a closer look.

# The wallposter format and measurements

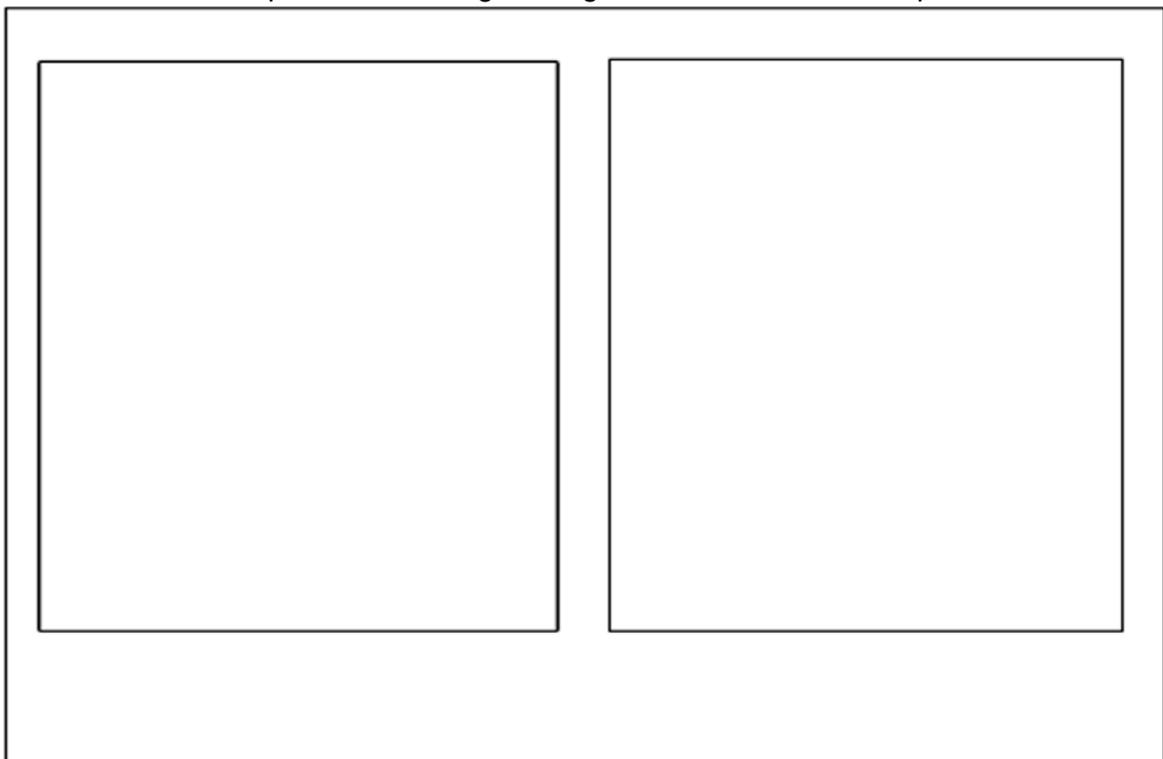
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The idea of the wallposter is to combine two A4-sized papers into a small poster. Both parts have the same layout and measurements, but the parts are combined with the panels facing each other.

Measurements:



The two parts should be glued together with a small overlap



## How to create your story

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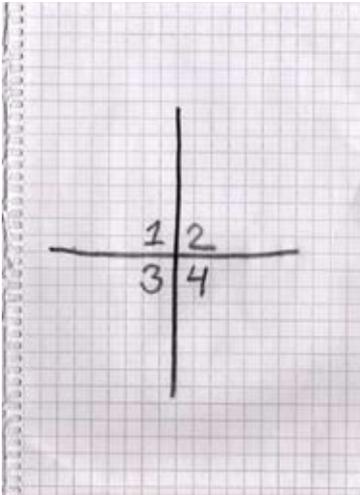
First you need to decide **what you want to say** with your story, which issue you want to change or point out. Also keep in mind your target group, the people who will read your comics.

Then think of a short story that will express the point you want to make. It is good to **write the story into the grid** (see below) to keep it from expanding too much. The story should not have too many characters and/or very complicated action.

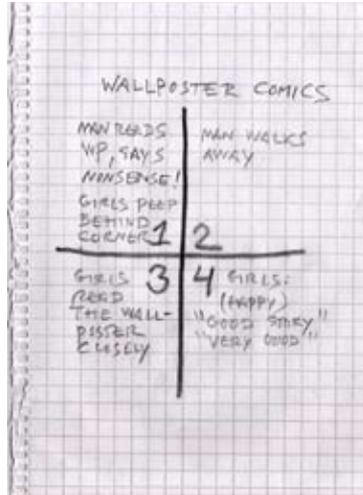
When the story is ready, read it out loud to somebody, and ask for comments on it. Immediate feedback is usually helpful at this stage.

The story should have an interesting beginning, action and an end that emphasises the point you want to make.

Think in terms of **scenes**, i.e. each panel is one scene. You can also imagine comics as frozen frames from a film.



1. Make a grid.



2. Write your story into the grid.



3. Go through your story, make changes until you are reasonably satisfied.

4. Now you can start working on a **visual manuscript**. i.e. sketch the images roughly and place the texts.

## How to make a visual script

Sketch in the images roughly and write the texts. Don't draw the images with a lot of detail, as the script is done mainly to plan how to use the space in the panel.

Two important things to remember:

1. Use as little text as possible. Never explain in the text what can be seen in the drawing.
2. Important matters should get more space and be in the foreground.

Your visual scripts could look like this:



To give space is to give importance.

## How to place texts and pictures

Reading order is from **left to right** and from top to bottom.

the person who speaks first is **always** to the left.



the person, who replies is to the **right** of the first one.

the person, who gives the third comment, is to the right of the others or **below**.

### Text narratives in a story

When you have a narrative (a text which takes the story forward) place it on **the top** of the panel, so that it is read first.



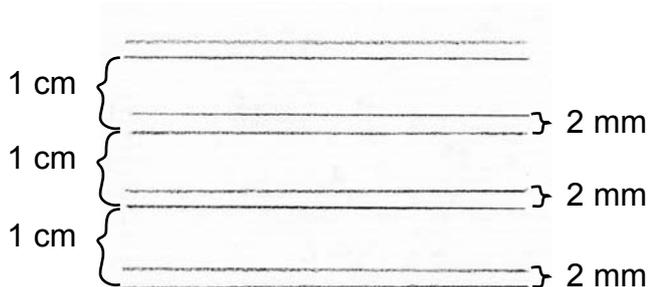
Another alternative is to have the narrative completely outside the panels. However, that is closer to only illustrating the text, not visual storytelling.



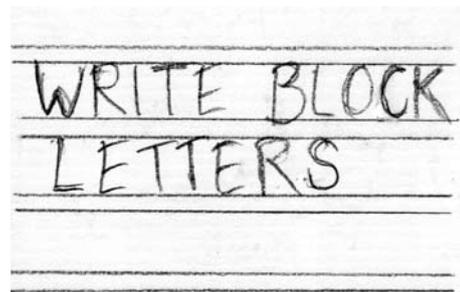
## Texts in the comics - how to write them

Texts in wallposter comics should be about 1 cm high. They should be readable from about 1 metre. Reading distance from something you hold in your hand is about 20 - 30 cm.

Text size is also important if the same comics will later be used in strips (see page 25) as the text will then be reduced to 50%.



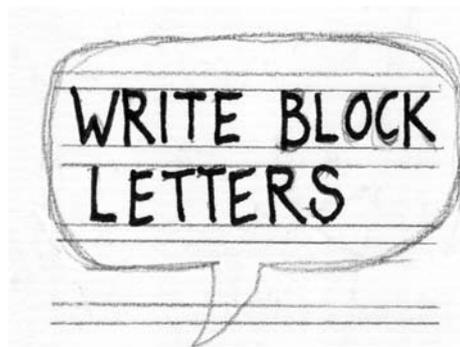
Make pencil guidelines for the text. Draw the lines (lightly) with 1 cm distance and add one more line 2 mm above each line.



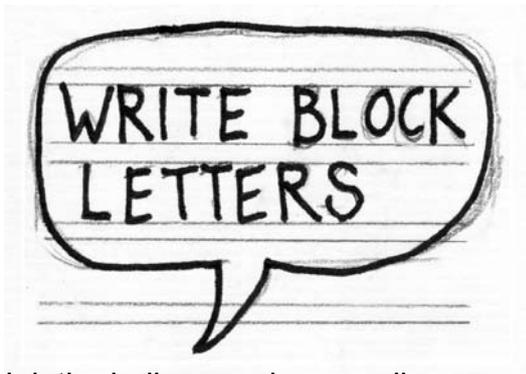
Then sketch in your lettering with pencil and proof-read it.



Ink the letters.



Draw the balloon, leaving a bit of space between the letters and the line.



Ink the balloon and erase all pencil traces.



Your lettering is now complete, readable and neat. The space around the text improves readability.

## Texts in the comics - balloons

Text balloons can take almost any shape as long as the pointer clearly indicates who is talking.



The pointer should point to the forehead (not the mouth)



A thought balloon has a wavy line and the pointer is made of diminishing round shapes.



You can also use a part of the panel border for your balloon. This saves a bit of space for you.



The dialogue comes from the telephone, which is shown by using a saw-tooth line in the balloon. It can also be used for radio sound. The reply is a normal balloon.

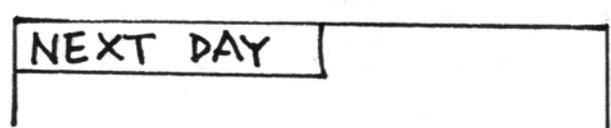
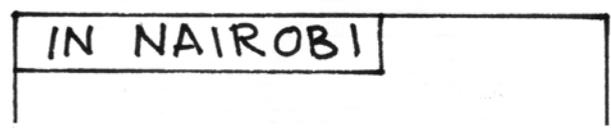
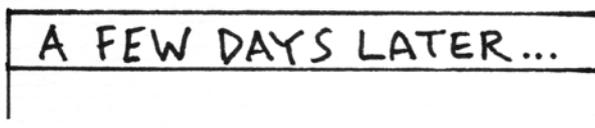


The text must always be easy to read even if the characters speaking are small.



If you want to emphasise that a word is spoken louder, make it thick and bold.

Sometimes you must explain that your story continues in another time or place, for that use an explanatory box. It is always the top left corner of the panel.



## Headings in the wallposter

In a wallposter you can put in a lot of information in the heading. The information should not, however, give away the point of the story, only set the stage. If possible, some visual element should be used in the title. This improves readability a lot, as can be seen in these samples from some of World Comics Finland's workshops in Africa and the Middle East.



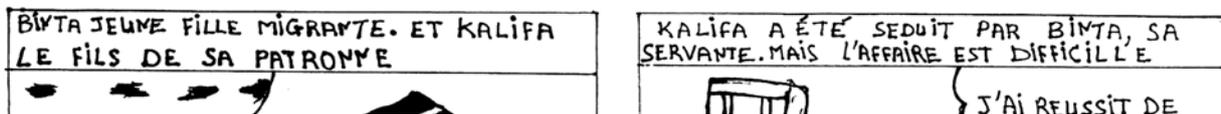
From Jérémie Rubabaza's story about a conflict about the inheritance of land, which led to a court case. Ngozi, Burundi, 2010.

“UMUPIRA” WAMAZE ABANA 

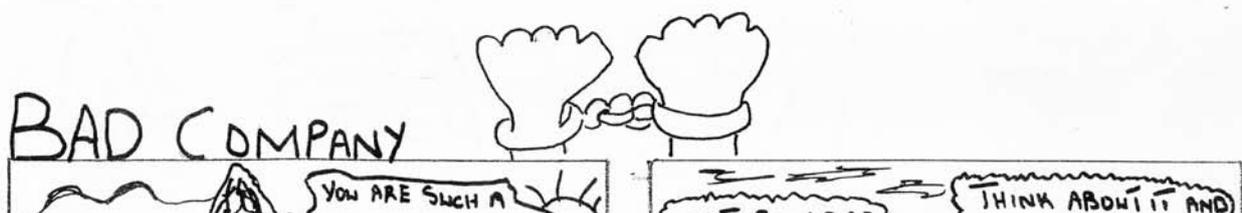


From Séverin Nibitanga's story about children, who mistook a hand grenade for a football. Ngozi, Burundi 2010.

GRÖSSESSE MOY DE SIRE



From Isaak Traore's story about an unwanted pregnancy. The use of decorative letters and making one of the letters into the shape of a pregnant woman, create interest. Cotonou, Benin, 2005.



From “Moha's” wallposter about how bad company eventually lands you in jail. Nairobi, Kenya, 2011.



From Omar Saleh's story on peace negotiations between the different Palestinian fractions in the refugee camps. Beirut, Lebanon, 2007.

## Foreground and background



Activities and dialogue that are central for the story should be in the foreground. Activities that support the story visually can also be put in the background (here: the person taking goods behind the locked-up shop).



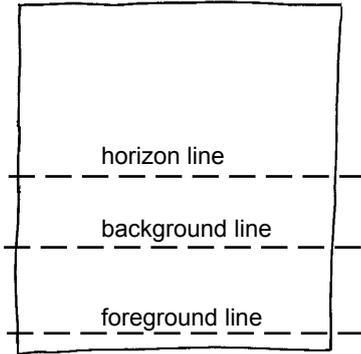
Here the dialogue takes place in the background. For the story it is important to show it takes place outside the school.



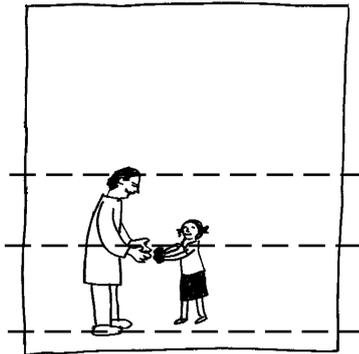
In this story the demonstrating crowd is as important as the policeman arresting the landlord. The open space around the arrest makes it easier to read the picture correctly.

To give space is to give importance.

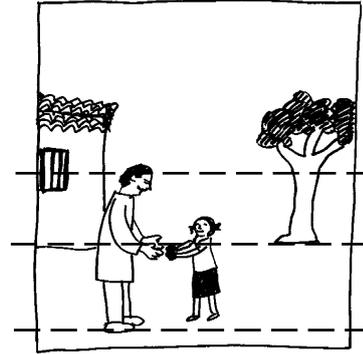
# How to add depth and perspective



Draw three pencil lines to help you place everything



Draw the main characters on the foreground line



Draw background items on the background line



Draw far-off items and a horizon line

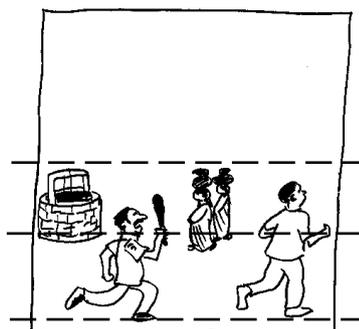
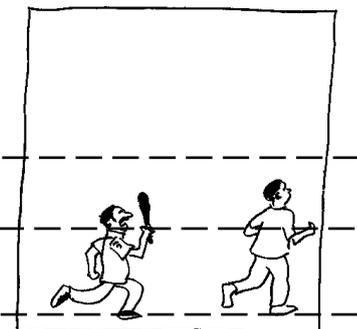
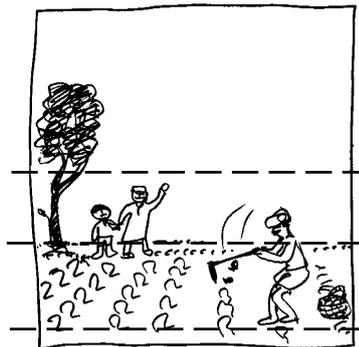
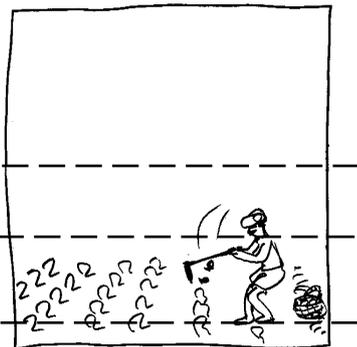


Now, remove the pencil lines



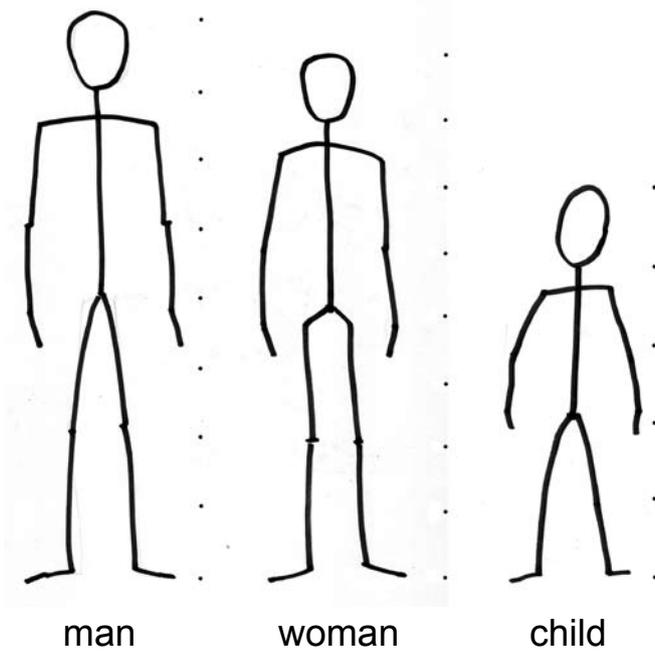
Add a few details, if you like

More samples:



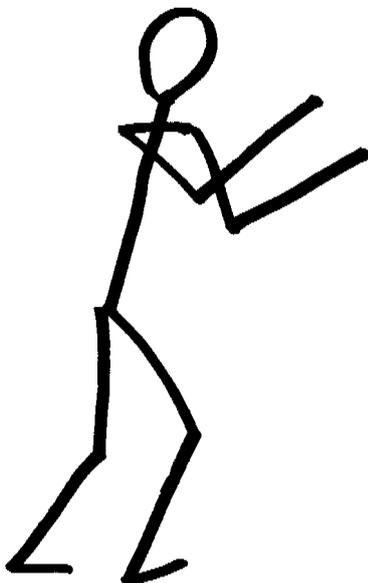
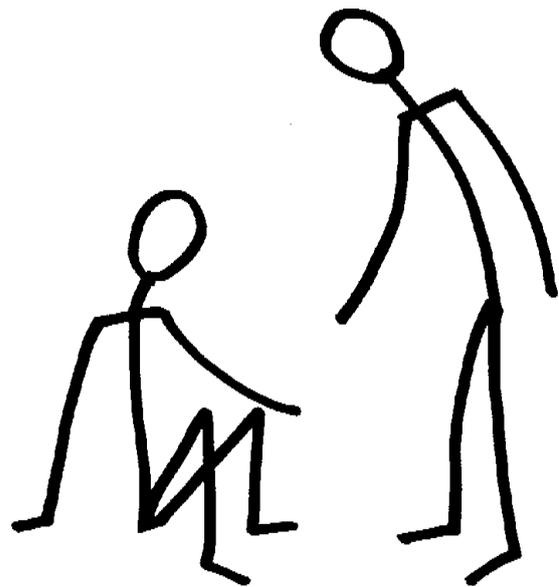
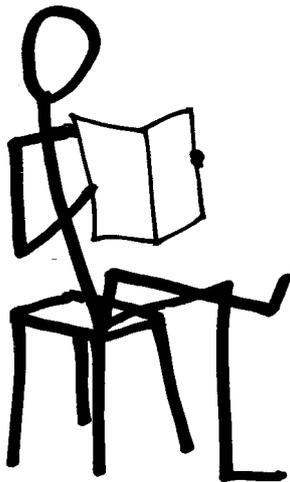
# Drawing people I

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Drawing people is not so difficult. You start with a stick figure and then try out different positions.

The human body is roughly proportioned as the table to the left shows. The length of a **fully grown** human body is about **eight times** the length of the head.



## Drawing people II

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Step one: draw the stick figure.



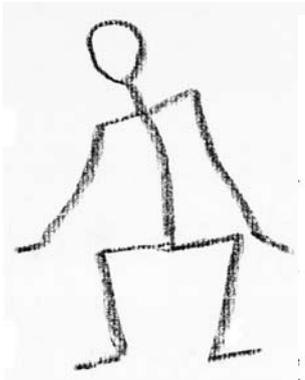
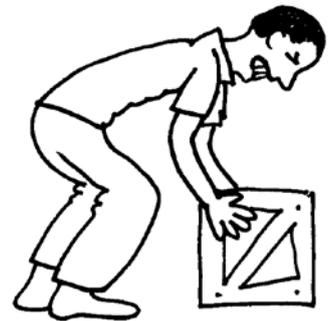
Step two: add flesh and clothes.



Step three: ink the drawing.

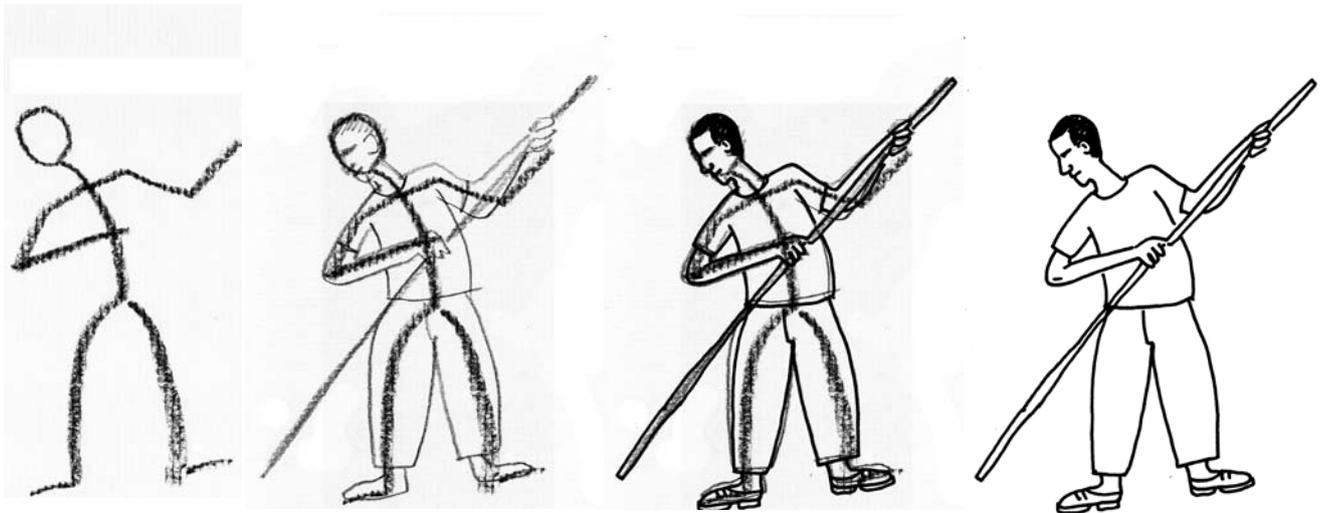
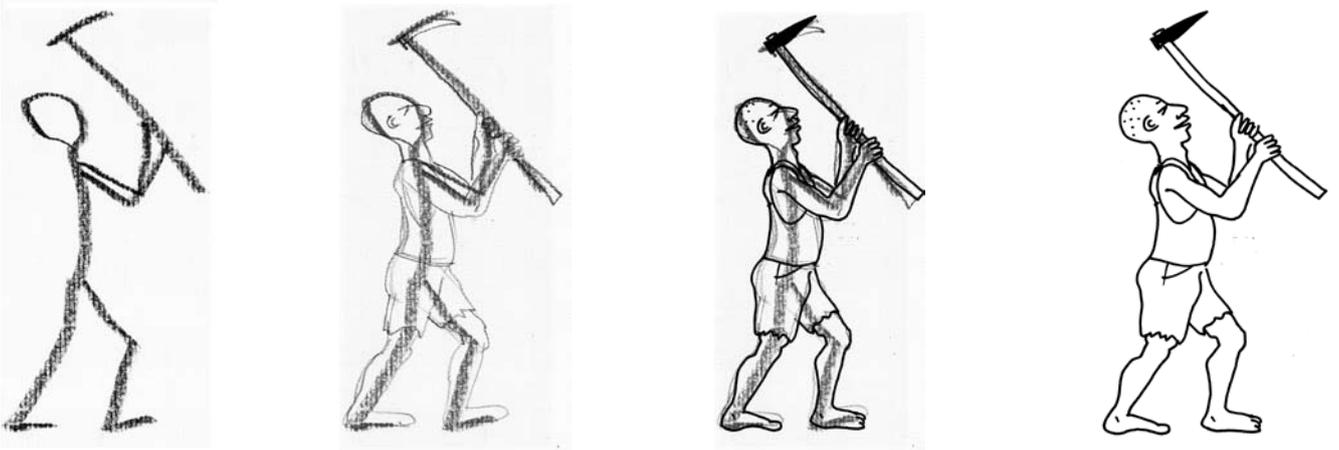
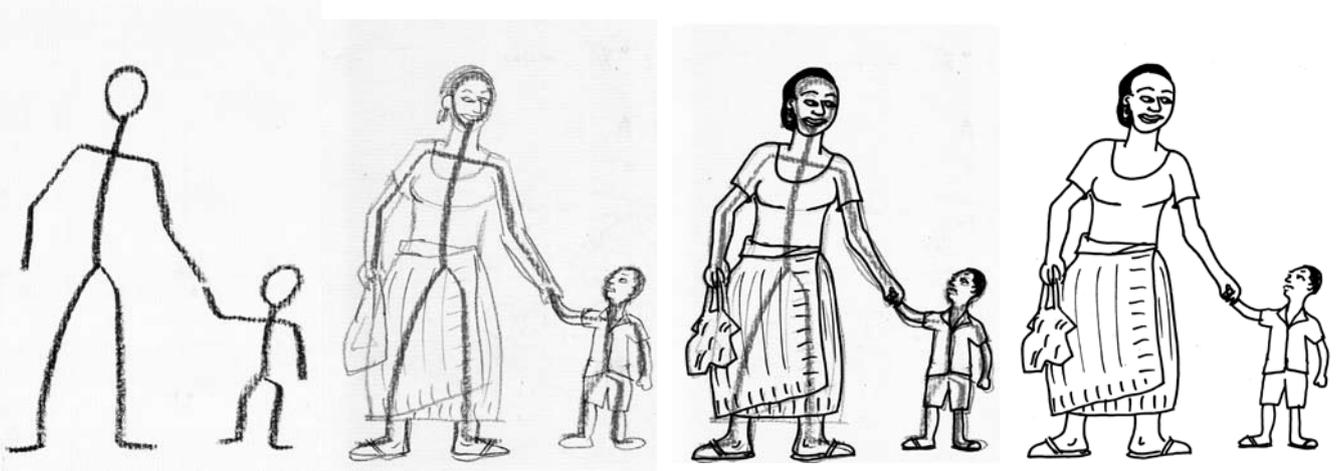


Step four: erase the pencil marks and add details if necessary.



# Drawing people III

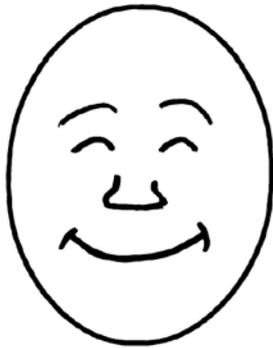
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## Drawing facial expressions

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Drawing faces is mainly to change the shapes of the eyes, eyebrows and the mouth.



happy



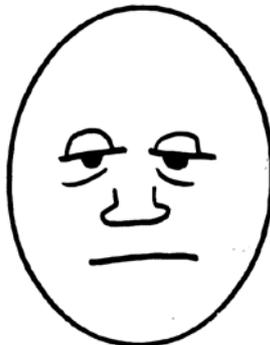
unhappy



furious



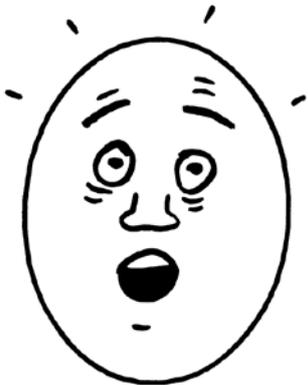
very glad



tired



proud



astonished



suspicious



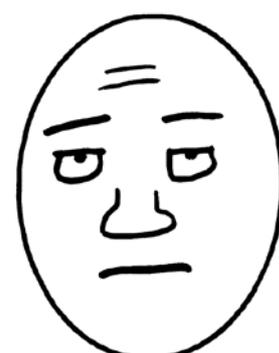
embarrassed



frightened



drunk



gloomy

## Drawing facial expressions - profiles

Drawing profiles is mainly to change the shapes of the eyes, eyebrows and the mouth. Note the angle of the head.



happy



unhappy



furious



very glad



tired



proud



astonished



suspicious



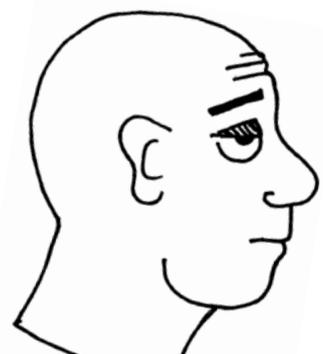
embarrassed



frightened



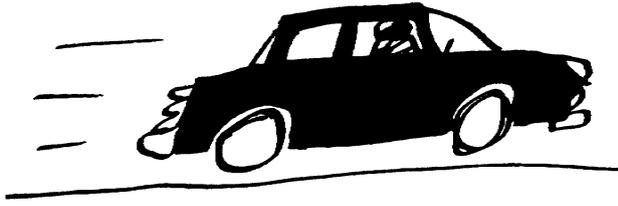
drunk



gloomy

# Drawing movement, sound and other effects

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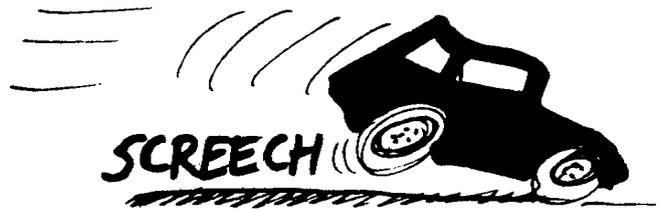
speed lines



direction and motion



bouncing ball with sound



hard braking and sound



pain in the thumb



music



rolling movement



slight hand movement

## Drawing surfaces and textures...

There is no point in drawing a lot of realistic details in a wallposter comic. Usually it is enough to indicate a surface with a few marks.



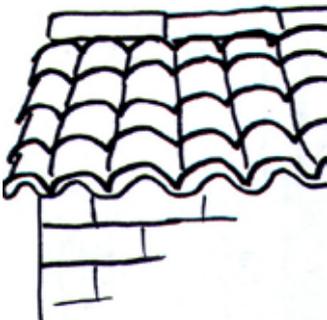
A few tufts of grass is enough.



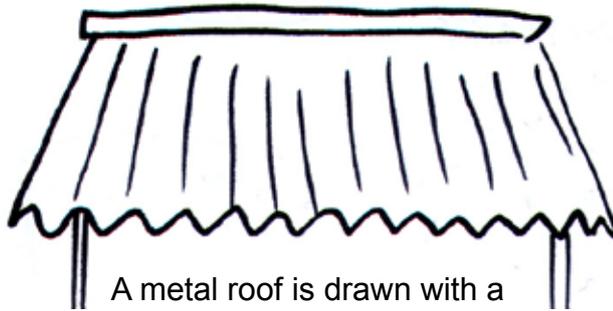
Dots and some small stones indicate a sandy place.



Mud is drawn by making small ridges and pools.



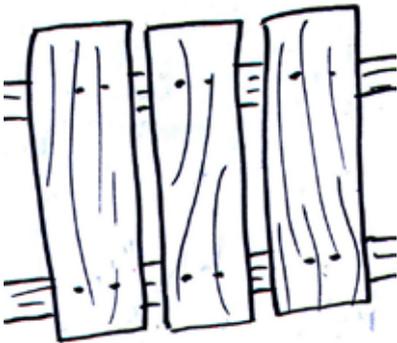
A tiled roof has a regular pattern. The brick wall is indicated by drawing a few bricks in the corner.



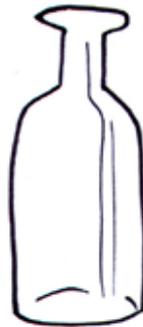
A metal roof is drawn with a wavy line for the edge and some lines to indicate ridges.



A mud hut is drawn by showing the ends of the thatch and the top line. The wall is just a line and some strokes to indicate a rough surface.



Wooden planks are drawn with a few thin lines and nails on the plank.



A glass bottle is drawn with two lines to indicate reflection.



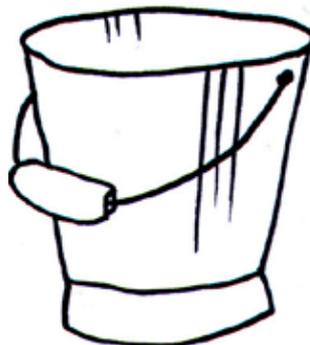
Spilled water.



Spilled oil.



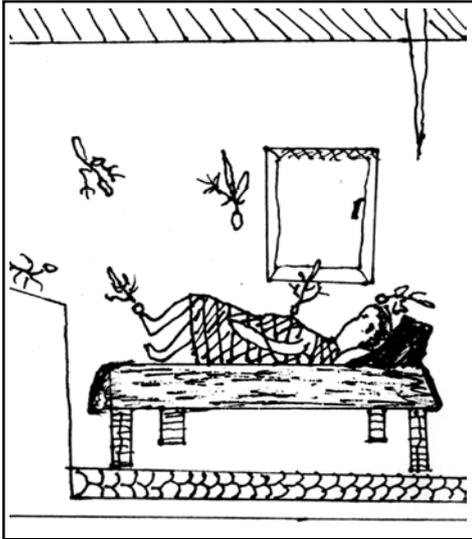
Window glass is indicated with one or two small strokes.



Metal is indicated by two-three parallel lines.



## Exaggeration works!



To exaggerate size, as in this story on malaria mosquitos, underlines the message.

The reader knows of course, that in reality mosquitos cannot be of this size.

In one story you should not have too many exaggerations.



Movement exaggeration. The man hits the other so that he flies up in the air.

Again in reality a movement like this is not possible, but here it gives an increased dramatic effect.



The man had an accident while drunk and had both his hand amputated. His wife comes to the hospital with a jar of local wine and says: "NOW, try to drink a little of this wine!".

This type of behaviour could most likely not take place in real life, but adds to the story a very dramatic effect.

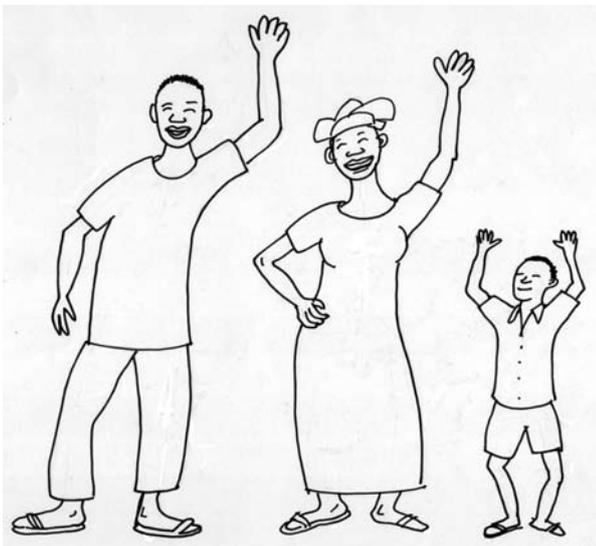
## Inking the drawing



First finish your pencil drawing



Draw the outlines with a thin pen

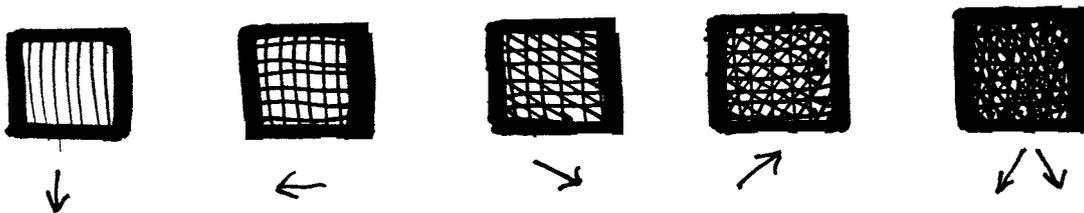


Remove the pencil lines with an eraser

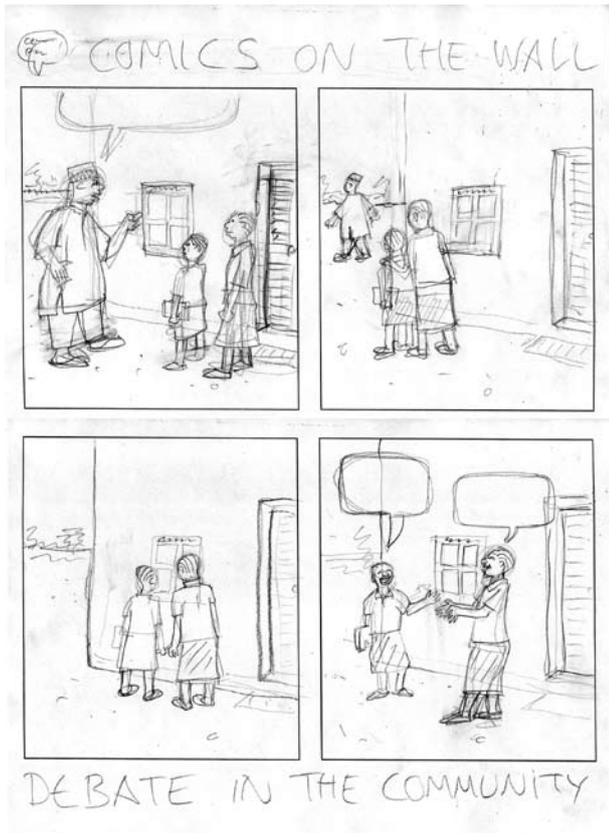


Finish with making cloth structures and other details

Create dark areas by **crosshatching**. The arrow shows the direction of ink strokes. Look at the last picture in the above sample. The boy's shorts are crosshatched, which makes them look dark, but not solid black.



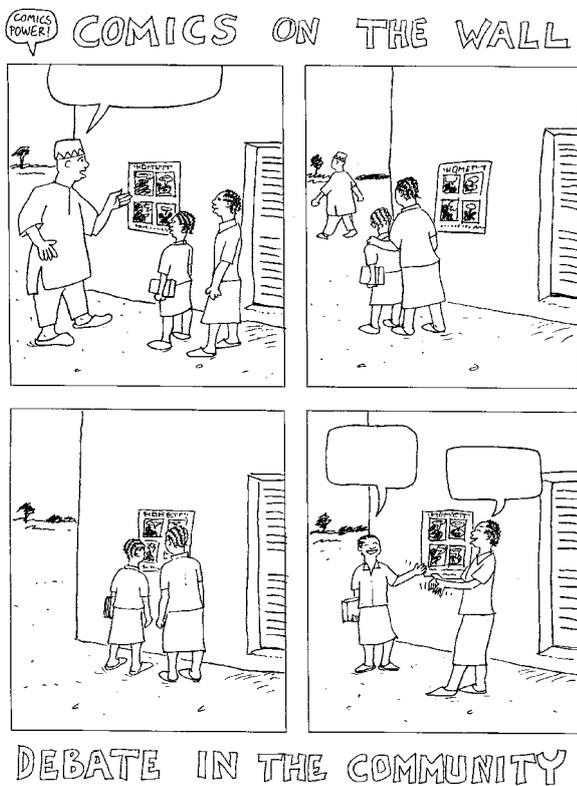
# Final artwork



1. pencil sketch



2. thin ink line added

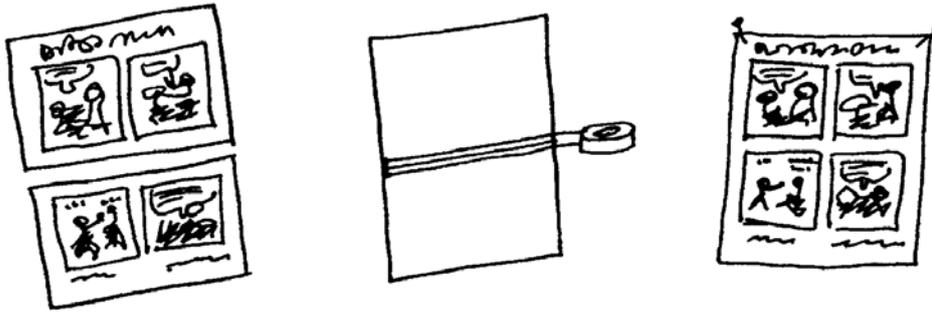


3. pencils removed

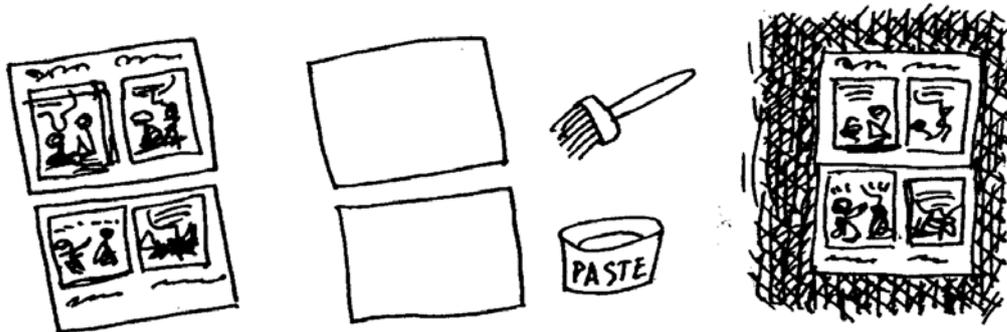


4. solid colours and details added

## Putting up wallposters



If you put up the wallposter in a dry area, you can glue or tape the two parts together from the back, and pin them on the wall.

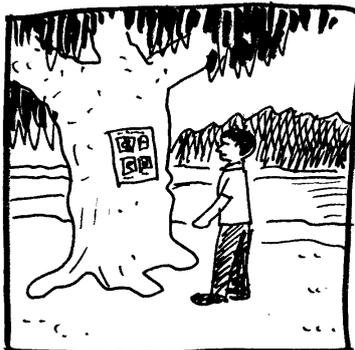


If you put up the wallposter on a wall outdoors, it is better to paste the pieces directly to the wall.

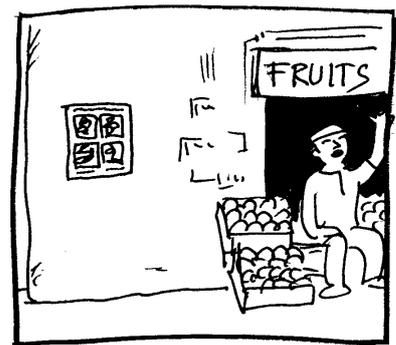
The posters should be put up in places where people move about. But you will have to get permission from houseowners if you put the posters on their walls.



On house walls



On trees



Next to a shop



On notice boards



At bus stops



On outside walls

# A wallposter comic can also be converted to a strip

First, reduce the size of the wallposter in a photocopier (50 %) and cut the wallposter in half. Then rearrange the two pieces into a 4-panel strip.

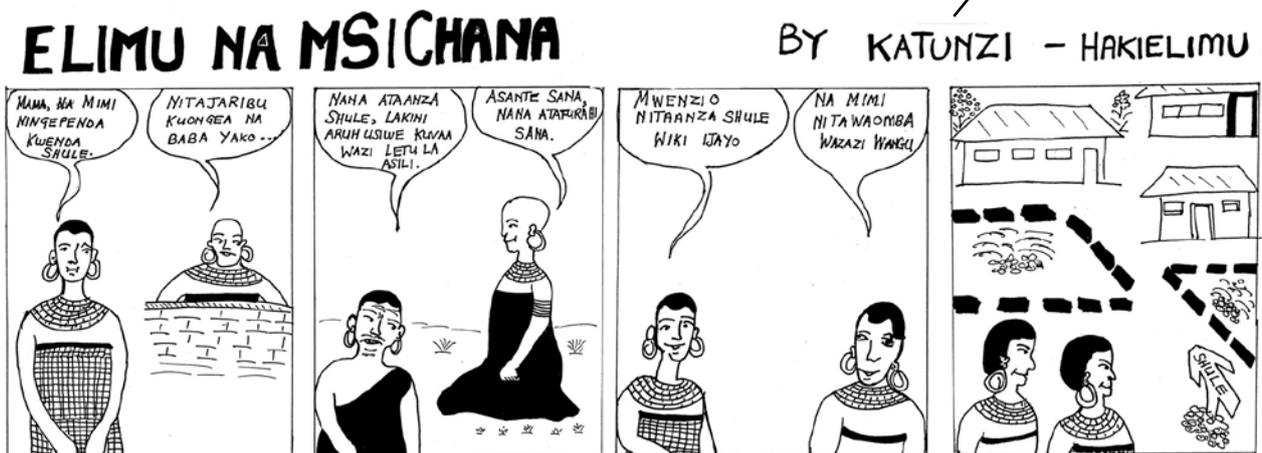
This can be done with scissors and paste or with a computer program like Photoshop.

Remember to take the signature from the bottom of the wallposter and paste it on top of the strip, in the right corner.

Now the strip can easily be published in a newspaper, magazine or pamphlet.



The signature from below should be placed on top in the strip.



Wallposter samples:

« DUKINGIRE AGATEKA KA BANYAMWEMA »



KWIZERA Nelly CLUB D.H.L.C. UMUREMERA

A mother fears for the safety of her albino baby and suspects some neighbors will kill it for witchcraft. This, however, does not happen, thanks to the timely intervention by the police. The comic was made by Ms. Nelly Kwizera in an APDH workshop in Muremera, in Burundi.

# INDYANE Z'AMATONGO.



AKIMANA Chris-Nathan DH LCUM

A man hires a killer to eliminate a landowner in order to appropriate his land. His brother intervenes and reports the criminal to the the court. The criminals are sentenced to life in prison. Story and artwork by Chris-Nathan Akimana of DH (LCUM) at an APDH workshop in Burundi.

# MY RIGHTS !!!



COMPILED BY: KEVIN MUTUA.

A boy who tells his parents that he is gay. His parents ostracize him and kick him out of the house. The boy then seeks support and comfort from his friends who accept him, even with his sexuality. The comic ends showing that even gay people have rights just like other human beings. Story and Art by: Kevin Mutua, Gay Kenya Trust.

## UMA COMUNIDADE COM MALARIA



EPF - NHAMATANDA.  
POR, ROSETE DA GRAÇA TITOSSE

A community with malaria. Dona Ana goes to the Health Centre and gets nets to prevent her from mosquito attacks. In the last frame, the author exclaims: Follow the example of Dona Ana! Story and artwork by Ms. Rosete da Graca Titosse. Made at a workshop at EPF in Nhamatanda, Mozambique in 2012.

# LA FORMATION DE BANDE DESSINE A BAMAKO



**ALHASSANE DIARRA E.J.T. SEGO**

Comics training in Bamako. First panel: The participants introduce themselves. Second panel: A drawing exercise in making expressions. Third panel: In three days all participants have finished their comics. Last panel: The certificates are given out and one of the the participants says that they will teach other AMWCY members how to make comics. Story and artwork by Alhassan Diarra of AMWCY's branch in Segou, Mali

# ДРУЖБА



Нарва 28.01.13

## Druzhba (Friendship)

1. Hello guys! Go away!

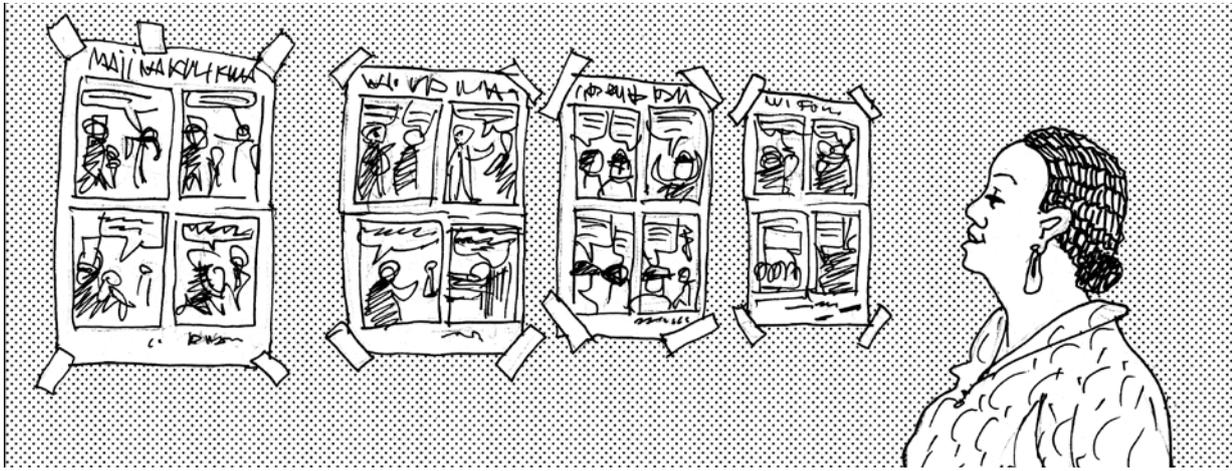
2. But why? According to the international convention of human rights, all people are equal!!!

3. Since when? We are people who follow the law! So let's be friends?

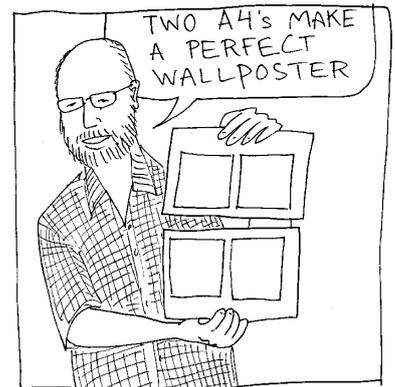
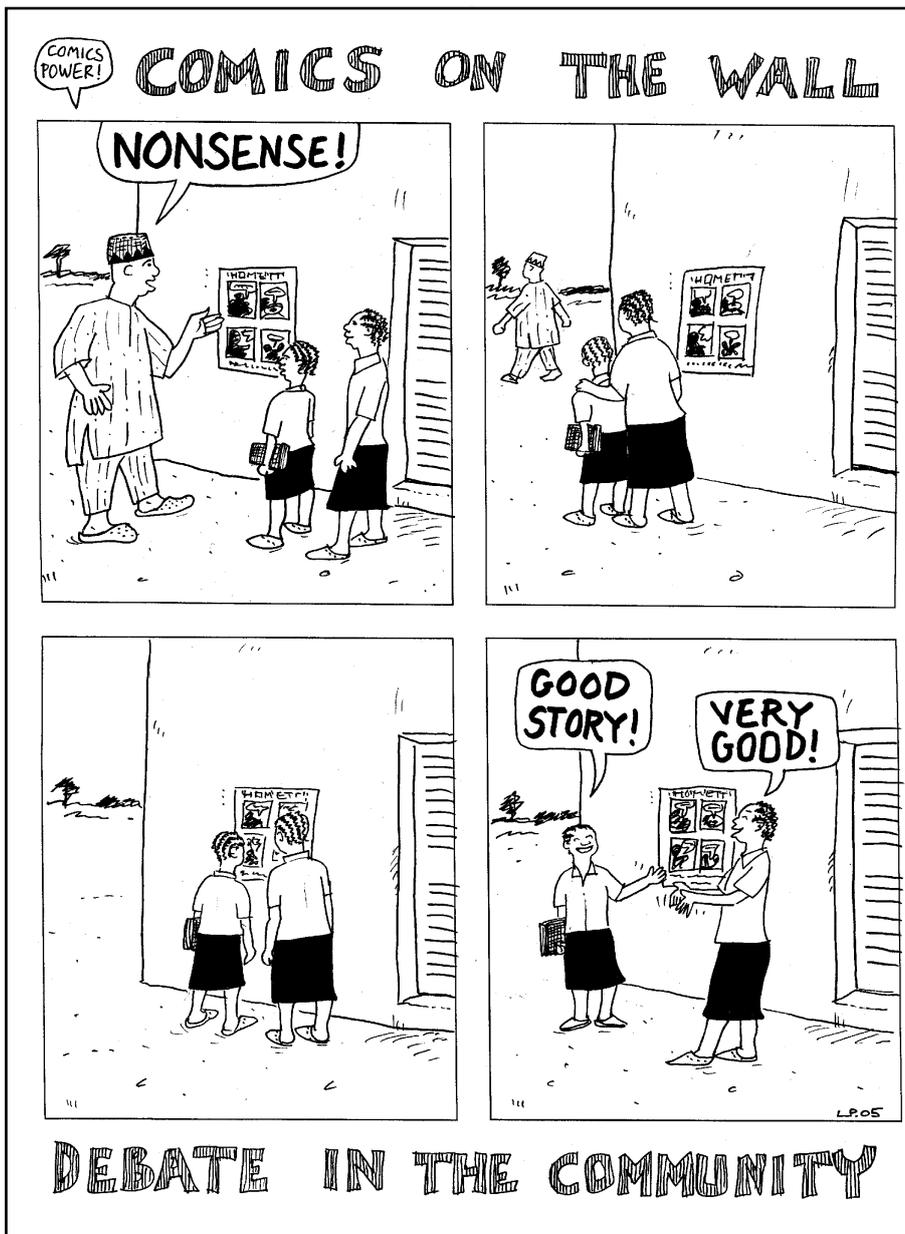
Story and artwork by Igor (from a workshop on racism, Mondo Estonia).

Igor

"IGOR"



WALLPOSTER COMICS CAN BE PUT UP ALMOST ANYWHERE!



WALLPOSTER COMICS ARE SIMPLE TO MAKE.

THEY ARE ALSO COST-EFFECTIVE:

YOU NEED ONLY PENS, PAPER, AND PHOTOCOPIING. NO INVESTMENT!

THIS MANUAL IS ALSO AVAILABLE AS A DOWNLOADABLE PDF-FILE ON:  
[www.worldcomics.fi](http://www.worldcomics.fi)



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