

# PhotoVoice

Photovoice is a creative instrument that combines images and text to involve individuals who typically lack a voice in shaping decisions that impact their everyday existence.



Inclusion And Diversity



Still image and Photography



13-30



10-35 participants



Photographs.

Laptop/TV.

Flipchart paper and markers.

Cameras, batteries, and rolls of film (if using a film camera).



Zoom or Google Meet can be used if run online



90 minutes



YOU.TH. Manual for youth workers  
- 3.3 Theatre Methodologies

<https://youth-theatre.eu/>



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It is an activity that can be performed both outdoors and indoors depending on the needs of your group.

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## Implementation:

Photovoice aims to enhance participants' comprehension of a particular problem while empowering them to express their perspectives using photographs. The primary objective is to enable participants to harness self-empowerment by allowing them to convey their experiences visually, address concerns that trouble them, establish connections with fellow community members, and actively push for transformative change.

The main activities of PhotoVoice are:

- Take photos and participates in group discussions.
- Reflect on strengths and resources within community.

PhotoVoice has been used with:

- Children and adolescents facing challenging situations encompass a broad spectrum. This group may consist of orphans and those enduring extreme poverty, youngsters compelled to labour instead of pursuing education, individuals residing in environments where violence is a constant threat due to factors like conflict or criminal activities, those who have experienced or are currently enduring abuse, or even those who have identified a particular issue, such as environmental destruction, that they aspire to address and resolve.
- Adults and families living in poverty. People with physical and mental disabilities or mental health problems. People with chronic illnesses or medical conditions – tuberculosis, diabetes, heart disease.
- Members of racial, ethnic, linguistic, religious or cultural minority groups. Members of these groups may be discriminated against, or may simply wish to share elements of their culture and lives with the majority.
- People in rural environment.

Methodologies applied:

Use of photography as an expression of people's economic, social and cultural reality. Focus groups in which the participants express their personal ideas and circumstances.

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## Implementation:

The use of PhotoVoice can be adapted to relatively short session times. For example, there are PhotoVoice sessions lasting 3.5 hours:

- Preparing location: 30 minutes.
- Welcome and presentation. Forming groups: 10 minutes.
- Teambuilding and Explanation: 25 + 40 minutes.
- Taking and selecting pictures: 40 + 15 minutes.
- Summarising and explaining next steps: 5 minutes.
- Grouping Results: 15 minutes.
- Plenary Presentation Results: 15 minutes.
- Discussing Pictures: 30 minutes.

However, it is recommended that this technique be carried out in different sessions, lasting approximately 1,5 hours. The main reason for this is the need to properly explain the technique and the use of cameras. For example:

- Session 1: Orientation.
- Session 2: Photo Taking.
- Session 3: Photo Discussion.
- Session 4: Gallery Event and Dissemination.

The fundamental concept of PhotoVoice is that learning occurs through practical experience. After participants have acquired the fundamental knowledge of the technique (provided in any environment with suitable audio conditions), the subsequent phase involves them actively capturing images that, in their view, illustrate or mirror the selected topic.

In general, PhotoVoice is conducted in a physical space. However, as a result of COVID-19, virtual sessions have started to take place through platforms such as Zoom or Google Meet.

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## Implementation:

### Implementation of PhotoVoice:

- Session 1. Orientation. Participants are encouraged to attend a session in which they will be introduced to the Photovoice methodology. This session covers the basics of operating a camera and discusses the ethical and safety considerations associated with engaging in Photovoice.

An example to introduce PhotoVoice: Now we're going to talk about Photovoice. Photovoice is a research methodology that uses this very power of pictures that we've been talking about today. Using photography, people can identify, represent, and analyse their communities and their associated strengths and needs. The visual images are accompanied by stories shared by the photographer. Photovoice participants analyse their own lives, communities, and situations through photographs, which are then shared, along with the stories that they represent, to relevant stakeholders.

- Session 2: Photo Taking. Participants are provided with cameras and instructed to capture photographs depicting aspects of their lives that address the research questions at hand. For this reason, it is important that PhotoVoice takes place in a familiar environment.

### Instructions for debriefing:

- Session 3: Photo Discussion. Participants are invited to a discussion session during which they receive printed copies of their photographs. They are then encouraged to choose the specific images they wish to discuss and subsequently present these selected photographs to the group for a collective discussion.

For example:

- What do you see here? describe the picture pretending someone can't see it
- What is really happening here? describe the actions and feelings in the picture?

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## Instructions for debriefing:

- How does this relate to our lives? describe how you feel about the picture and how your experiences are similar or different to what is shown.
- Why does this situation, concern or strength exist? describe the underlying meaning and root causes of what is in the picture and its impacts on you and your community.

Next, the facilitator asks some questions to facilitate reflection and bring the group together in the collective discussion.

For example:

- What is your reaction to the story and photograph that was just presented?
- How are your experiences similar?
- How are your experiences different?

Once all the participants have shared their photographs, the facilitator summarises the main findings of the discussion session and some of the commonalities that arose.

- Session 4: Gallery event and Dissemination. The photographs, along with their accompanying narratives, are exhibited at a gallery event. This event is attended by members of the community, policymakers, representatives from the media, and other relevant stakeholders. This session is optional, it is done whenever possible as one of the objectives of the PhotoVoice is to show the reality to other members of the community.

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## Tips and notes to the facilitator:

It is important that the facilitator is clear that:

- Photovoice is intended to be a participatory process, involving collaboration right from the outset. This implies that the participants, who form the community of photographers, should be actively involved in the project's initial planning stages, as well as in the subsequent planning and implementation of the project.
- Participants involved in Photovoice projects require training. Depending on the background of the participants, some may have no prior experience with using a camera, while others may already be familiar with it. Regardless of their experience level, it is essential to provide basic photography training to ensure that everyone involved has a fundamental understanding of photography techniques.
- Participants need support. They should be given the chance to present and engage in discussions about their photographs. Creating a safe and nurturing environment is crucial, as it allows participants to acquire new skills and build confidence in their capacity to articulate their thoughts and viewpoints effectively.