

PhotoVoice

Purpose of PhotoVoice

This exercise is designed to understand how issues related to water, sanitation and hygiene are prioritised (if at all) by the primary participant and how they fit within the larger context of being a disabled person in Malawi. This method aims to empower participants with photography skills so that they are able to share their personal perspectives and experiences of how WASH access challenges affect the lives of individuals with disability. This was considered particularly important for the exploration of this topic which tends to be difficult to talk about since it is very private.

Requirements

- Digital camera, SD card and spare battery
- Photo printing facilities
- Notebook and pen

Identifying participants

It may not be possible to do PhotoVoice with all individuals with disability. For this exercise it is important that participants are able to follow instructions and think critically about the task being given. Because of the nature of digital cameras motor skills are important. For individuals with severe intellectual impairments this task is likely to be difficult. However since it is also a very practical interactive exercise, it may be possible to undertake the activity with those who have mild intellectual impairments. Our experience indicates that not only does this task work well with those who have physical disabilities, but it can also be used effectively with individuals who have sensory impairments (including those who are totally blind) and could work well with those who have hand/arm impairments.

Consent and explanation of the process

The consent process must be done very thoroughly to ensure that the primary participant and immediate family members understand the purpose of the activity and what they are agreeing to.

Key aspects that should be highlighted in the written consent form and explained to the primary participant and family members are:

- Should you agree to participate the researcher will visit your house at a convenient time and spend 2-4 hours with you.
- If you decide to participate you will be given a photographic camera and taught how to use it.
- We will work with you to take several photos of your daily life over the course of the time we are there with you.
- At the end of the day the researcher will take the camera back and develop the photos. The next day (or at an alternative arrange date) the researcher will return with the printed photos and they will discuss them with you and conduct a short interview.
- You will get to keep copies of the photos you take. With your permission, the photos you take may be used in the report from this study or an exhibition to help others understand the perspectives of people with disability.
- You will own the copyright on the digital images, this means that you have the right to determine how they will be used. It also means that when they are used you will be always acknowledged as the photographer.
- They will not be shared with others without your permission.

- Your name and identity will not be used or recorded as part of the study report, unless you give us permission to do so.
- Your participation is voluntary, if you feel uncomfortable with the process at any time please tell us. You can also decide to end your involvement with the study at any time. Learning about photography may be something new to you and at times may seem frustrating or too difficult. Let us know if you are feeling like this so that we can try a different approach

Note: The participant is not specifically informed that this is a study about sanitation, water and hygiene as this may affect what they choose to take photos of.

Ask the participant if they have any questions and answer these as thoroughly as possible.

The participant should be asked the following question to obtain their initial consent:

- I have read/been read the information provided above and I have understood it. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study (tick one box - yes or no).

Consent must be signified in writing by the primary participant wherever possible. Where the participant is unable to give full consent or is under 18 a guardian/caregiver must also provide written consent. Where primary participants or their caregivers are illiterate they should use a thumbprint to signify their consent.

A secondary process of obtaining permission should be done after the photos have been taken. This process relates to how the photos can be used and how they should be acknowledged. This is done after the process so that the participant can make a better judgement about how they wish them to be used.

The participant should be asked the following:

I understand that I retain copyright of my photographs but give permission for LSHTM to retain copies of the images for use as consented to in the list below:

- As part of this study report (tick yes or no)
- In other reports, campaigns and publications by LSHTM or affiliated partners and donors (tick yes or no)
- At public exhibitions related to this study (tick yes or no)
- On the LSHTM website or websites affiliated with this research (tick yes or no)
- In media about this study (tick yes or no)

Do you want these photographs to be credited with your real name? (tick yes or no)

- If no please specify alternative name to be used.....
- If yes please state your name as you wish it to be used.....
- Please provide a contact phone, email or address.

PhotoVoice Process:

The PhotoVoice process used in this research was partly taken from the process developed by photovoice.org -

(<http://www.photovoice.org/methodologyseries/inclusivemethodology/designing.htm>)

1. **Understanding the camera** - A photographic camera (digital) will be provided to the participant. The field worker should explain simply how the camera works and allow the participant to observe (or feel if they are visually impaired) where the lens is and how the

shutter works (a visually impaired person can listen to the shutter noise and feel the lens while closed, so not to leave marks on the lens). The field worker should take time to teach the participant the basic features of the device including how to switch the camera off and on, how to take a photo and how to view the photo. Allow the participant to have a go taking a photo to see what it feels like. It is important that while the participant is learning about the camera they are also holding it so that they begin to be familiar with how it feels. This is particularly important for people with sensory impairments so that they begin to learn how the buttons feel and how they are positioned. A useful starting point is to remind the individual to always use the wrist strap/head strap.

2. **Understanding photography** - Since many of your participants may never have seen a camera before and may have seen relatively few photos in their life, it is also important to explain the purpose of photography. We found that a simple way to explain this is to say that photography can serve several purposes. You can use photography to capture a moment you want to remember as if it was real again. Give an example of this by getting the participant to take a photo of the fieldworkers or their house, view the photo and point out that it looks exactly like it is in real life. Then explain that you can also use photography as if it was art by arranging things in a certain way that tells a story or creates a version of reality that can be explored or questioned. Give an example of this too – if you want to take a photo of the idea of ‘hunger’ it may be hard to show this literally. But you could use symbolism to show hunger. You might have a family seated in their living room, all looks normal except all of them have empty bowls in front of them. Explain that what we are going to do today is use photography to tell their story and creatively express their views.
3. **Understanding the elements of Photography** –
 - a. **Landscape/Portrait** - Shooting can be done vertically (portrait) or horizontally (landscape). Show participants how this effects the image and explain that portraits can be better when you are focusing on a person and landscapes can be better when you want to capture more of the environment. For people who are visually impaired this can be demonstrated using a mount board window, which can be rotated and felt by the participants. A collection of tactile objects such as toys or fruit can be a good focus for this exercise – the window can be placed by the display in each position and the difference in what is contained in the ‘photo’ felt through the window.
 - b. **Framing** - Explain that when taking a photograph it is not simply a matter of pointing towards the subject, but of deciding what is included in the photo – all or some of the subject, the subject and the background, the subject and what is above it etc. Tactile objects can be a useful reference for explaining this concept to someone who is visually impaired. Show the participant how to adjust the framing by using the zoom.
 - c. **Foreground/background** - This must be explained in a verbal way as well as using their body as a reference. For example you can ask two participants to stand one in front of the other, and then explain who is in the foreground and who is in the background and what that would mean in a photograph (i.e. who would seem more important, more prominent, larger in the frame etc). Show the participant how to change the focus on the camera.
 - d. **Distance (only for people with visual impairments)** - When taking a photograph, it is very important to identify the distance to the subject, in order to be sure that it is framed as desired. This can be done by reaching with or laying out a cane, measuring it with steps, or measuring with the joints, such as hands, wrists, arms and forearms. It can be very reassuring for a photographer to know how a photo of a person will be framed if taken from the distance of one cane's length, for example.
 - e. **Focus/blur** - It is important to clearly identify the area that needs to be in focus. The photographer needs to remember that he/she can communicate different feelings or ideas depending on what is focused on in the photograph. Here is one way the

concept can be explained in a way that makes sense to someone with no sight: When one touches a glass bottle, one identifies the material, its temperature, its dimensions and every detail that makes one recognize the object as a bottle. If this is done again with a thin cloth over the bottle, the details of the bottle won't be recognized so precisely. Nevertheless, one will still know it is a bottle, since some details, like its shape and size, are still recognised. This is what happens when one sees an image that's blurry or out of focus; one recognizes what it is but cannot make out the details clearly.

- f. **Light** - Light plays an important role in a photograph since it produces different effects, which lead to different feelings in the observer. A person in darkness, for example, may convey an experience of feeling hidden, where as a person in bright light may convey confidence or nothing to hide. These effects need to be explained fully to blind or visually impaired photographers who will not necessarily realise the impact of the light on their work. To explain this try invite the participant to think about the warmth they feel on their face if they are in the sun and use this sensation to determine where the light is coming from. Also teach the participant how to use the flash setting for dark environments.
4. **The photographic task** - Once the participant is comfortable with all this, set them their task. Explain that you would like them to take a total of 10 pictures. The first 5 are to represent the best parts of your day, when you are happiest. The second lot of 5 photos should represent the most difficult parts of your day, or the things you would most like to be able to do without relying on others or feeling different. Before you start taking photos suggest that you list down what each of those things will be so that you can remember them. For each one then think about how you could represent the experience or feeling.
5. **Self-Directed portraits** - It is likely that in settings where participants are unfamiliar with cameras and photography that they will be keen to be in the photos rather than just taking them. If the participant wanted to be in the picture then they still had to direct the field worker as to how they wanted the photo to look, providing direction on whether it was to be a portrait or landscape shot, what was in the foreground or background, how much of their body should be in shot etc.
6. Arrange a suitable time to return to the individual's house to give them their photos and have a short discussion.

Printing and interview

When you return with the printed images ask the participant to caption each of the images. To explain what a caption is ask the participant to imagine that there is a person looking at the photo who doesn't know them or anything about how they live – their task is to explain to them the experience they were trying to convey.

Once they have done this get the first 5 photos of their happy experiences and ask them to rank these from most important to least important. Document the order. Then ask the participant to do the same for the 5 photos representing the most difficult aspects of their day. Ask questions to explore why the photographs have been placed in the order that they have. If there are photos of WASH related issues explore why these are particularly significant. If there are no WASH related photos ask if the individual has any issues with any WASH related activities. Ask them to do WASH demonstrations (see separate method sheet). If they report barriers in accessing WASH ask how these issues compare to the ones that they took photographs of and where in the ranking they belong. If they do face challenges invite them to take photos to represent these issues (although explain that you may be unable to give them a copy of these).

Sample PhotoVoice: 5 photos of the best parts of your day, when you are the happiest.



One of the happiest moments in my life is when I am singing



I like playing with children. Here we are pretending to cook with soil and containers.



I like watching videos. Here I am about to go to the market place where they are screened. On my trike I wrote a sign that says 'Off to the movies!'



I like good food and relaxing while drinking sweet beer.



I like doing business because it is a great way of meeting people.

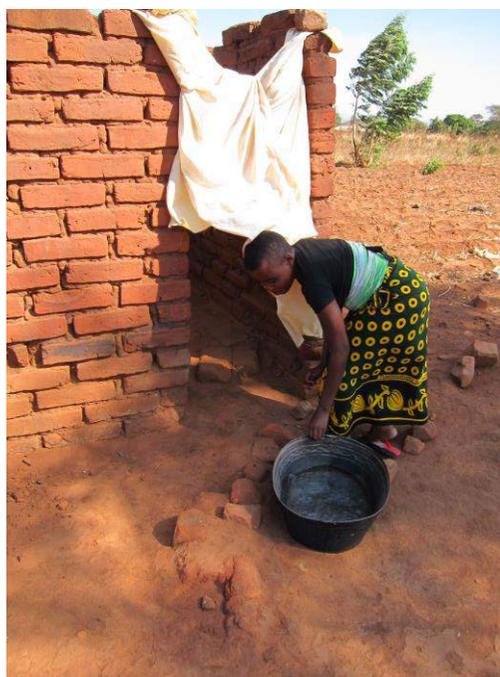


Ranking these in order of those that are most important to least important.

Sample PhotoVoice: take 5 photos to represent the most difficult parts of your day of the things that you would most like to be able to do without relying on others or feeling different.



I have the desire to clean the front yard of my house but I am unable to do that.



I am unable to carry water on my own so instead I adapt and just drag it behind me into the bathroom.



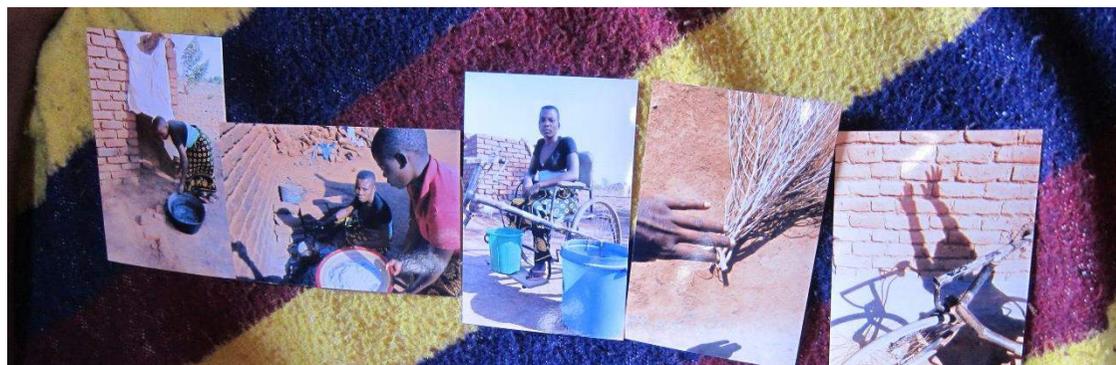
I love netball but I am unable to play with my friends because of my condition, it makes me unhappy.



I have difficulty getting enough water for myself. You can see the blue bucket that's what normal people carry, but I can only fit the small green one on my trike.



I love cooking but I have to always rely on others to carry food and materials to the kitchen so it also makes me unhappy.



Ranking these in order of those that are most important to least important.