

What is Photovoice?

Photovoice is a type of participatory action research that engages people in the process of naming, capturing, and strengthening their community through photography.¹ The essence of photovoice is that the perspectives, knowledge, and expertise within marginalized communities are valuable to inform and enact policy change.¹



Wang and Burris, the creators of photovoice, initially used it in the late 1990s to do a participatory health needs assessment with women living in rural China.¹ Through their research, they developed **three main goals of photovoice**:

- (1) to document and reflect on community assets and areas for growth;
- (2) to use small and large group discussions to critically analyze community issues through photography; and
- (3) to influence policymakers to enact community-informed health policies.¹

Since Wang and Burris' community-based research project in rural China, photovoice has been implemented in communities across the globe that have ranging access to healthcare, such as HIV care, which has provided community members a platform to influence policy.

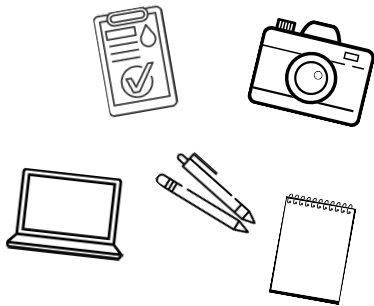
Photovoice in the Context of HIV Care



Several studies have shown photovoice is effective for health education and increasing the self-esteem of women of color living with HIV.^{2,3} The African American and Latina/Hispanic women with HIV who participated in the photovoice study by Davtyan et al. (2016) reported a lack of health education and cultural myths contributed to the stigma they faced. They described the photovoice process as therapeutic because they were able to share their experiences and challenges living with HIV.²

Participants expressed higher self-esteem, self-confidence, and control of their HIV status after participating in photovoice.³ Some participants felt that this open dialogue helped them be more vulnerable with others about their diagnosis and increased their confidence to advocate for others in their community.²

Suggested Materials and Potential Costs to Prepare for:



- Cameras or photo-capable devices (1 per participant)
- Pens/Pencils
- Notebook(s)
- Laptop
- Consent Forms
- Dissemination materials and plans (i.e. posters, venues, food, drink, publishing fees)

Who should be involved?

- **Facilitator(s)** - will oversee project progress and lead group discussions. They will also assist in the dissemination of findings. Facilitators can be case managers, patient navigators, social workers, or members of a project evaluation team at your organization.
- **Participants** - participants should be community members with particular investment in the issue you're trying to explore. They may be former or current clients, members of your organization's client advisory board, or key community leaders. They will take the photos, write narratives, and, if comfortable, be the leaders in dissemination.

The Eight Stages of Photovoice

Learn About Photovoice - What is the question you'd like to answer with your photos and analysis? Remember to co-construct the definition of the issue that is the focus of the project by consulting with key community leaders and organizational partners, as well as expected project participants.



Determine who will facilitate and participate in the photovoice project. It is also important to discuss ethics, such as photography of minors, and consent throughout the project. Consent forms should be used to ask permission to take photos of other individuals in the community, and consent should be received from participants before publicly sharing their photos.

The Eight Stages of Photovoice (cont.)

Additional things to think about in this first stage...

- What kind of change or action would we like to see as a result of this photovoice project? How will examining this issue using photovoice lead to action?
- Think about the timeline of the project. Be mindful of staff capacity. Don't forget to leave enough time to sort through all the data and analyze!
- How can we ensure and uphold confidentiality and/or anonymity throughout the project?



Take Photographs - Encourage creativity in photo-taking! Photos can be of the participant themselves, an object, a landscape - whatever each participant feels best portrays their answer to the agreed upon focus and question. Have the participant write a brief caption describing the context of the photo, the intent of the photo, and how it makes them feel.

Discuss Photos and Reflect on

Experience - Review submitted photos one at a time as a group. If participants are comfortable, have the participant explain why they submitted their photo before engaging in a group discussion. It's suggested that photo analysis and discussion be guided by a SHOWeD approach.¹



The **SHOWeD** approach:

- What do we **See** here?
- What is really **Happening** here?
- How does it relate to **Our** lives?
- **Why** does this situation, concern, or strength **Exist**?
- What can we **Do** about it?

The Eight Stages of Photovoice (cont.)

In discussion, facilitator(s) should consider...

- What kind of facilitation strategies will ensure that everyone is engaged in the interpretation and narrative building processes?
- How can we make sure that the photographs and narratives accurately reflect the participants' perspectives?

Write or Dictate Narratives - Following the discussion of each photo, identify key themes and patterns. Think of these themes as narratives that can inspire next steps and action-taking. Use the last question of the SHOWeD approach "What can we do about it?" to start discussing how to use the narratives to inspire change.

Choosing Photos for Sharing - If you are planning to display photos through an exhibit, poster, or mural, or use them in dissemination materials, it is strongly encouraged to include all photos. Ensure that photos are printed and used with each photographer's consent, and that there is always the option for anonymity. Ask yourselves: What are the implications of sharing these photos? How, if at all, could public sharing risk confidentiality?



Invite People to Join Dissemination

Preparation - As you continue to discuss action items and next steps in how this photovoice project has inspired change, also consider if there are additional people that you, as a group, would like included in the conversation. This could be community members, other organizational staff, local or state policymakers, etc. This will also help you identify appropriate dissemination methods and expand your reach.

The Eight Stages of Photovoice (cont.)



Present and Exhibit - Determine what would be the most effective methods for sharing your findings from this photovoice project and do it! This could be through publishing a piece in a local newspaper or scholarly journal, showcasing a photo exhibit, or leading a presentation. As you get prepared to present findings, ask yourself: how is dissemination giving participants' voice? Who needs to hear the message? Why?

Reflect and Move Forward -

Ensure that there is time to reflect on everyone's experiences and perspectives with this particular photovoice project. What worked? What didn't? Was it enjoyable? You could conduct focus groups or one-on-one interviews with participants, and/or administer electronic surveys.



And That's It! You've Completed a Photovoice Project!

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1. Wang, C., & Burris, M. A. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health Education & Behavior*, 24(3), 369-387. <https://doi.org/10.1177/109019819702400309>
2. Davtyan, M., Farmer, S., Brown, B., Sami, M., & Frederick, T. (2016). Women of color reflect on HIV-related stigma through photovoice. *The Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care : JANAC*, 27(4), 404-418. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jana.2016.03.003>
3. Teti, M., Pichon, L., Kabel, A., Farnan, R., & Binson, D. (2013). Taking pictures to take control: Photovoice as a tool to facilitate empowerment among poor and racial/ethnic minority women with HIV. *The Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care : JANAC*, 24(6), 539-553. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jana.2013.05.001>