

Another Look

Participatory photography project with the International Field Program of the Graduate Program in International Affairs at the New School

“How wonderful it would be if we could see the world through one another's eyes.”

- Thoreau

“With each picture I feel like a gardener. When you take the film, each roll is like a seed and when you see your creation, it is a flower.”

- Anonymous day laborer, Long Island/ Unseen America

“We do not make photographs with our cameras. We make them with our minds, with our hearts, with our ideas.”

- Arnold Newman

“When I have a camera in my hands I feel happy. I feel like I am learning something...I can be someone.”

- Suchitra, 14 years old, Calcutta/Kids With Cameras

TRAINING MATERIAL SOURCE:

Excerpted from “*The PhotoVoice Manual: A guide to designing and running participatory photography projects*” (www.photovoice.org). With slight modifications/additions by Ambreen Qureshi.

ABOUT THE PROJECT:

The “Another Look” project is intended as an introduction to the power of participatory photography as a tool for personal empowerment and social change.

This project is based on the fundamental right of all individuals, irrespective of age, gender, race or wealth, ability, religion or political affiliations to be able to access tools and skills through which they can find strength in their own voices and the means to represent themselves.

The project also works to invert the power paradigm of traditional photojournalism which, although seeking to raise awareness in order to effect change, is still a process enacted more often than not by ‘outsiders’.

At the heart of the participatory approach is the aim of increasing the involvement of marginalized groups in decision-making that affects their own lives.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- *To give participants an opportunity to document their own lives and experiences*
- *To provide a platform through which participants can express their hopes (dreams, likes) and fears (concerns, dislikes)*
- *To help participants find confidence in their own voice*
- *To encourage dialogue with others from the community*
- *To provide an alternative, insider perspective on their lives for international viewers of their images/words*
- *To explore advocacy possibilities with the work created*

I. PLANNING, DESIGNING AND MANAGING YOUR PROJECT

Project Research and Planning

It is essential to carry out adequate research before embarking on the project, especially when working with socially marginalized groups where there may be complicated and challenging issues to be faced

In addition to all of the research on the political, economic, social and cultural environment that you are already doing for your IFP, do look into the arts and photography scene in your country and community, are there galleries in the area (you might want to organize a class visit)? Is there a professional photographer in the area that might want to give a slide show/talk about his/her work? Are their cultural issues at play in terms of taking photographs in the first place? Stigmas of being identified?

Remember also that research does not stop when you reach the project country. A good facilitator or project manager will listen and come to know their participants' community intimately.

Partner organizations provide vital local knowledge, connections with potential participants and logistical support. The local partner should provide the venue and support staff, such as translators.

The crucial element in successful partnerships is absolute clarity in the objectives, expectations, and responsibilities of the respective partner organizations including mutual respect and open communication.

It is often important to invest time in getting the partner staff "on board" to ensure a feeling of shared ownership and responsibility for the project and to enable objectives and methods to be agreed between you.

Research local processing facilities well before the workshops start.

Quality may not be that great, but if you take the time to develop a relationship with a lab, explain the project to them, they may be motivated to take more care than usual with processing. Could be good publicity for them too, as they can be credited.

Project Design

Things to consider:

- Are there any potential risks to the participants involved in the project? How can you minimize these risks?
- What if the participants want to get paid to be involved in the project?
- Will you need specific permits for the project? How can you get them?
- Are you likely to have any problems with the local authorities? Is bribery common? How can you get around this?
- Will you need local authority approval to show the photographs publicly?
- Is the media censored? Is there freedom of expression?
- What race, gender, class, caste or other social issues need to be considered?
- Do the participants have a secure or routine lifestyle or are they living on a day-to-day basis, e.g. as street children? This will affect their ability to attend or even remember to attend workshops.
- Will participants' medical needs/conditions affect how workshops should be structured?
- Will some participants have particular difficulty with some activities or excursions? How can this be accommodated?
- What level of concentration can reasonably be expected of the participants?
- Can the participants read and write? If not, how might this affect your method of facilitation and evaluation?
- Will you need translators?
- How many participants might speak English? How can they help you with others that don't?
- What level of education do the participants have?
- Are participants likely to have been encouraged to think for and express themselves or will their education have involved much learning by rote?
- Have participants taken part in any previous advocacy projects or acted as community leaders?
- What arts activities may participants have taken part in before?
- Is the skills level of the group mixed?
- Will participants have had access to cameras before? Will they have photographs at home?
- Will individuals stand out in their community/society if they take cameras home from the project? Will this cause a problem or put them at risk?
- Do the participants know the area that the project is taking place in?
- Can the participant afford/have the time to take part? Would they normally be engaged in activities that generate income at the time that the workshops will take place?
- Should the project pay a stipend to the participants to take part? (This may be appropriate in certain cultures, and especially for adults with dependents.)

- Will the gender of the facilitator play a role in the gender makeup of the workshop participants?

The local facilitator plays a crucial role in the success of the project. When working out the **timetable**:

- be realistic, start with practicalities
- build in flexibility to accommodate unforeseen circumstances and particular needs of the group
- allow adequate time in the beginning to discuss the project and for participants to acclimatize to each other
- think about any preparation needed for outshoots
- make time for party or celebration or special trip at the end of the project

[See enclosed suggested timetable for 8 week IFP project]

Selecting Participants

Usually selected by partner NGO so it is vital that they fully understand what the project involves and what will be expected of the participants i.e. participants need to be willing to show their work in public arena (even if anonymously).

Select participants based on aptitude and commitment.

If working with transient communities (i.e. street children) it is realistic to expect some participants to drop out, not take photos or even to sell the cameras because they need money.

Be mindful of gender issues that might be at play, may have to have a single sex rather than mixed sex group. Gender politics can affect the dynamics of participation. In cultures where women traditionally play a less vocal role in community affairs, men/boys may well take center stage and do most of the talking, or vice versa in some situations.

In many cultures, both women and men will feel uncomfortable speaking about certain issues in front of the opposite sex.

Projects must be designed in conjunction with local partner organizations that fully understand the local social context.

Ensure that there is space with the workshops for both women and men to express themselves freely.

Unless it's a single sex project, try to ensure a gender balance.

This is not just a youth media project, it will include adults as well. Too many of these projects focus on youth and there are some great participatory projects out there involving adults. Also, not all IFP NGOs are youth based, so we will have a mix of participants. But each group of 10 should not be mixed adults and children, as it is a very different training/learning process when working with adults and children. We just need a mix between the country projects.

Copyright

The concept of copyright may be quite foreign in some cultures and needs to be carefully explained in terms that participants can understand.

Photos should be credited

© Photographer name /NGO name /Another Look

Model release

It is not realistic to expect the participants to get signed releases from the subjects they are photographing.

Participants need to understand the importance of explaining to subjects why they are taking photographs and what the intended use of these photographs might be. They should acquire verbal consent wherever possible.

It can be really useful to ensure all participants have a letter outlining the project, which they can present to people who will be recognizable in photographs.

Ethical issues are just as important as legal ones. Remember that if you are working with sensitive issues, such as homelessness or HIV/AIDS or sex work, people may have very good reasons for not wanting to be named or depicted in association with the project. Everyone is entitled to this privacy.

Managing the Project and the Team

The project manager needs to give appropriate credit to volunteers for their work, be willing to listen to them, and acknowledge their input and ideas

Cultural sensitivity

- Be aware of cultural differences
- Learn as much as you can about the culture you are working in and modify your own behavior appropriately
- Many things such as dress, ways of speaking and body language have the potential to offend or confuse
- In some cultures, families do not allow images depicting female family members to be seen or shared, and in certain cultures photography is thought to 'steal the soul'
- Do not assume your point of view or knowledge is superior
- The importance of cultural sensitivity and respect for difference cannot be overstated
- Be sensitive to team dynamics, be aware of privacy issues and remain approachable to all

Looking after yourself and your team

Participatory photography projects can be immensely demanding – emotionally, mentally and physically – not just for the participants but also for the project managers.

Allow time for writing notes after each workshop and record participants interactions and any emotional changes going on (best to do the same day as so much will be going on and you don't want to forget and lose insight on valuable lessons learned.)

Make time for personal processing day-to-day maybe in the form of a diary, your own photography, or a video journal.

Child Protection

Most organizations working with children have a formal Child Protection Policy that outlines the organizational norms that govern good practice when working with children. Be aware of this policy and make sure your project falls into line with the policy. Ensure referral systems are in place for any participants causing concern.

When working with children and adolescents, it is necessary to get written permission from parents or guardians for them to participate in the project and additionally, to attend any excursions and outshoots. **[See enclosed participation release for this project – all participants/guardians should sign.]**

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Monitoring and Evaluation of any project is important in order to demonstrate the outcomes and impacts. M&E enables learning - to identify successes and challenges or areas of improvement.

The people and groups most directly involved should decide what constitutes success. Evaluation can use elements of self-evaluation by the participants as well as external, independent evaluation.

You need to be careful about attributing change to the project, you maybe too close to the project to evaluate impartially. Also increases in confidence and self-esteem are hard to define, as well as measure.

Questions that might be asked and answered through the M&E process:

- Has the project done what it intended to?
- What worked and what didn't work? What can be learnt from this?
- What could have been done differently?
- What changed for whom as a result of the project?
- Were there any unexpected changes?
- What evidence is there that such changes are due to the project?
- What external factors might have contributed to these changes?
- Did new partnerships or relationships form or develop?
- Is this model or approach transferable to other communities?
- What more effective methods for achieving the objectives emerged from the work?
- What additional knowledge or support might be required to improve this project?

Some of the M&E tools and exercises you may want to use:

- Informal interviews
- Semi-structured interviews – conducted with open ended pre-listed questions
- Participant observation – observing and recording changes in participants
- Participant-led evaluations - participants themselves determine how they want to evaluate the project
- Anecdotal evidence – i.e. visitor feedback from exhibition
- Project/participant diaries
- Video interview or post-workshop reflections by participants
- “Most significant change” method – ask participants the question “During the last month, in your opinion, what do you think was the most significant change that took place in the lives of people participating in the project?”

[For this project, you might want to get a base-line survey (i.e. have participants write about themselves before the workshop) and then at the end of project have them write about themselves again, so that you can see if there have been any changes.]

Reporting

At the end of the project, maybe a section of your final IFP report should be on your experiences with the project and may include the following:

- Revision of project goals and objectives
- Summary of project timeline
- Overview of activities
- Key outputs
- Successes and challenges
- Sustainability issues/recommendations for project continuation
- Key lessons learned
- Excerpts of M&E data

Analyze all data collected and feed this into a project report to share with key stakeholders. Acknowledging problems and failures often provide useful lessons for future work, which should also be shared.

II. THE WORKSHOP STRANDS

Four strands of workshop content are:

1. Establishing the group dynamic and goals
2. Introduction to photography
3. “Speaking out” through photography
4. Strengthening and personalizing the message

Strand 1. Establishing the group dynamic and goals

A facilitator’s first responsibility is to ensure that participants understand and agree with the project’s overall concept.

It is important to re-evaluate project objectives with participants at beginning of workshop. This not only gives participants a sense of ownership over the project, but also serves as a useful reference for participatory evaluation at the end of the project.

Make sure that participants are aware that they have control over the direction of the project and encourage them to bring their own ideas to its development

Remember that using photography as a communication tool – let alone an advocacy tool – can be a very unfamiliar concept to people who have not been involved in the development initiatives before or picked up a camera.

Realizing the possibilities of photography as a tool for communication is one of the central learning curves through out a project and it may only be towards the end of the project that the participants really begin to understand what is possible.

Ensure that these preordained decisions do not disempower participants, but instead that they are excited by the prospect of being involved in such events.

Setting ground rules

Ensure that participants understand that taking part in the project entails responsibility and serious commitment, and that they agree to attend all scheduled workshops.

Cover basic issues like listening to other people when they are speaking, respecting each other, turn taking etc.

Breaking the ice

'Ice-breaker' games are useful in encouraging positive and creative group interaction.

The best interactive games have simple, clear instructions, are fast moving, use skills that everyone in the group has, involve everyone but get each person to do something independently and spontaneously.

Games can be used for introductions, to focus or energize the group, or simply to have fun.

It is a good idea as a facilitator to build up a collection of games that can be used with different groups of people, depending on their interests, abilities, age, cultural situation, etc. Be mindful of gender issues here too! You might want to run your ice-breaker ideas with your local coordinator beforehand. **[See enclosed handout with links to sources for possible ice-breaker games]**

Possible games:

Birthday partner game/get-to-know-you game

Everyone in the group walks around and talks with others. The aim is to find the person whose birthday (not the year, just the date) is closest to your own. When

you've found them, talk until you find two other things in common. Report back to the group. (If you are working with orphans or others who do not know their birthdays, do not use this game!)

Boo!/energy game

Silly but fun. Stand in a circle. Everyone looks at the ground. At an agreed signal everyone raises their heads and looks into the face of someone else in the circle. If two people are looking at each other, they yell "Boo!" and drop to the ground. Repeat until everyone is out.

Strand 2. Introduction to photography

Visual literacy

Before teaching any photography it can be a valuable exercise to ask participants what their understanding of photography is and to get them to think about how and where photographs are used in their culture and society.

This will enable you to gauge the 'visual literacy' of the group and will encourage participants to begin to look out for photographs. Ask them to bring in some photos to discuss – either ones from home or ones they find in magazines etc. Introductory discussions can be held around the photographs and people's likes and dislikes. Find out what participants' previous experience of photography may be.

The camera

Explain what a disposable camera is (one time use, so participants are not confused or disappointed when they don't get to use it again).

Identify the different parts of the camera and explain their functions (i.e. viewfinder, lens, flash, the shutter release, frame counter, film forwarding dial etc.)

Show participants how to hold the camera properly (avoid putting fingers in front of the flash or in front of the lens, can hold either horizontally or vertically).

Explain the basics of taking care and protecting the camera (keep away from dust, heat, water etc., avoid dropping and so on).

Briefly explain how the photographic film process works. Finding out how light is channeled through a camera, how it affects the light-sensitive film inside and how a print is made somehow makes the magic of photography more exciting and accessible.

ASSIGNMENT:

Write step-by-step procedure on how to take a picture using the disposable camera without flash, forwarding to the next frame and then how to take a picture using flash. Email to me and I will send out the various explanations to the group and you can decide which is clearest and use that for your workshop.

Key elements of a good photograph

In teaching any of these elements use examples from your own photographs you bring to the workshop, work from other photographers in magazines, books etc.

Composition

Composition is fundamental in photography. It takes time, effort, practice and sometimes luck, to achieve a well-composed photograph.

When participants have never taken photographs before, spend some time at the beginning playing with composition and framing without actually taking pictures.

A simple exercise is to ask participants to make a rectangle with the thumbs and forefingers of both hands. Held up to the eye this will form a viewfinder, which can be moved in and out by moving one's arms forward and backward. Alternatively use empty slide mounts or create a cardboard cut out.

When introducing composition get students to look at the following elements:

- Foreground and background – what is the relationship between them?
- The main subject or focal point – where should it be placed within the frame?
- Cropping within the frame – do you want to include all of the main subject?
- The basic shapes in the picture
- The effect of dividing the frame
- Creating space between objects
- Proximity or distance from the main subject

Remember “If your pictures aren't good enough, you're not close enough.” – Robert Capa

Holding the camera still

Encourage participants to support the camera, to ensure no blur, is vital!

Camera angle/point of view

These affect both the composition and the emotional feel of a photograph. Play around with looking down on people and looking up. Encourage participants to use their bodies and their imagination – to crouch or stand on chairs for example. Also cover holding the camera horizontally and vertically.

Movement

A sense of movement can often make a picture. Composition plays a role here, as the position of a moving subject will influence how it is read. Is the subject moving into or out of the picture?

Understanding light

The word 'photography' is derived from the Greek and means 'drawing with light.' It is important to discuss light and its different properties, especially the differences in natural light through the day, from early morning to dusk. This will

enable participants to decide when to go on outshoot. Also discuss shadows and reflections and how these affect photography.

Flash photography

Explain the differences between the quality of artificial light and that of natural light and use of flash in photography. Especially when using simple point-and-shoot cameras ensure participants understand the minimum and maximum distances at which they can effectively use flash, without causing glare or underexposure.

Lines, patterns and textures

Encourage participants to look at different textures and patterns and to consider how these can affect a picture and its composition. Encourage them to photograph subjects with strong lines.

Build your own exercises

With all the elements above, try 'imaginary photography' exercises using the hands as the viewfinder:

- Take the same picture from three different angles, to use both horizontal and portrait framing
- Take three pictures where the background is important
- Take three pictures that focus on color, three focusing on pattern, line and texture etc.

Also bring in your own photographs (or those from a magazine, book) to illustrate these examples so that all can see and discuss at the same time.

Common mistakes

Mistakes are an important and inevitable part of the learning process. They include:

- fingers or hair over the lens
- camera shake
- taking pictures from too far away (one of the most common errors).

Encourage participants to 'fill the frame' and look at all the space as well as the object they are photographing. If it is too small, they need to move closer

- cutting heads off/unintentional cropping

It is important not to be too prescriptive. Some of the best photographs can contain unconventional elements, and mistakes can sometimes turn out brilliantly. Remember not to put too much importance on right or wrong in the workshops. Encourage participants to be creative, and also point out how their photography could be improved.

First photographs, portraits, self-portraits

Many participants are really excited when they first get their hands on a camera and when they learn how to take pictures. They will also probably leap at the chance to take photographs of each other and their friends and family or hand

off the camera to someone else to take pictures of them. Remind them that they can include these kinds of shots, but they should focus on the assignment at hand as well.

Portraits

Go over some of the different ways of taking images of people

- Headshots vs. full-length shots – why would you want to choose one over the other?
- Picture of person with sun on face vs. picture of person with the sun behind them so that their face is in shadow – how can this affect how we see someone?
- Posed/unposed – what are the differences?
- Expressions – what do different expressions convey to a viewer?
- Self-portraits – what are the different ways of taking your own picture? (in mirror, reflection in glass or water, photographing your shadow, holding camera at arms length and trying to place yourself in viewfinder, taking a picture of a photograph of yourself, photographing a body part and so on)
- Peer-portrait – creating peer portraits can provide participants with an opportunity to define how they want to be seen. Participants can create images that counteract stereotypes.

Get participants to work in pairs. Each member of the pair directs and sets up their own portrait, with their partner taking the final shot.

For this project, the first image on each roll should be an ID photograph taken by you of the participant holding up a sign with his/her name (this way their identity is secured on the negatives!) Approximately one third of the roll should be peer portraits/self portraits, one third should be on the theme of their hopes (dreams, likes) and the other third should be on the theme of their fears (concerns, dislikes). They can be photographed in any order, but it might help some participants to be more focused than others. Be flexible!

Photographing strangers

Some participants may feel uneasy about going up to strangers and taking photographs and indeed in some cultures this can cause problems. Sometimes they are even asked for money when they were taking photographs.

Remember to check that participants are not at risk by being seen as an easy target by others in their community for walking around with cameras. Ensure participants are comfortable about carrying the cameras in public.

In some cases it may be necessary to provide participants with project ID cards and letters explaining their involvement in the project.

It can also be very difficult to take natural pictures on the street, people may play up to the camera and constantly pose. As they become used to photography, their cameras become less conspicuous.

It is very important for the group to discuss issues that might arise when photographing strangers so they can prepare for situations they might find themselves in.

You might want to conduct a role-playing exercise with the participants and cover a positive and a negative scenario of photographing a stranger. It will be good for the participants to practice how to explain the project to a stranger and encourages confidence.

Some projects have even set up a mini portrait studio and invited people to step inside. Encourage participants to take notes of names of people they photograph and any other interesting facts.

Not just faces

Remember that portraiture does not have to be about recording faces. If people don't want their portraits taken, participants can photograph a different part of their body, or find creative ways to cover someone's identity (i.e. hands partly over face, face in shadow, photograph from behind etc.). This is particularly relevant to projects where participants need to maintain their anonymity for either personal or safety reasons.

Strand 3. "Speaking out" through photography

As the project advances it will be possible to move away from initial personal views and feelings to explore the issue at the heart of the project. For some groups, creating and focusing on advocacy messages come naturally, whereas others will require more structured support, brainstorming and discussion sessions to generate key messages they feel comfortable with.

Working with themes

Before participants develop strong ideas about their personal goals within the project they will probably need ideas to inspire them.

THE THEME FOR THIS PROJECT:

What are your hopes and dreams?

What are your fears and concerns?

If you find this difficult for your group of participants, you can modify the assignment to "What are your likes? What are your dislikes?" Try not to veer too far from this subject, as our hope is to get all participants across the 7 IFP countries to answer the same question.

Encourage participants to come up with their own ideas under this theme. Get the group to discuss different possibilities and decide where they want to go to take the photographs. Try to link themes to the key focus of the project and ensure that they are culturally appropriate.

Outshoots

Until the participants gain confidence and experience, most groups will need supervision and guidance when they go out to take photographs. At the beginning of the project, it is useful for participants to go out as group and start shooting. The facilitators and any other additional staff needed should accompany the group to provide advice and support. Sometimes volunteers with photographic skills can be a useful resource at this point. At the beginning participants may photograph around the workshop venue – taking portraits of each other or the local environment. Later on, try to organize outshoots to relevant locations if you can.

On outshoots participants must have a concrete idea of what they want to capture with their photographs. Encourage them to carry a notebook or the caption sheet to write down the frame number and a few words about what each photograph is of, why they took it and what it is intended to communicate.

In this way, the students think more carefully before taking pictures. They will use the film more wisely and produce more meaningful pictures. Some groups will take to writing notes; with some this will never happen.

Strand 4: Strengthening and personalizing the message

Discussing and editing images is one of the most important parts of the project and will happen throughout the project. Through this process participants start to develop a better understanding of visual communication – a crucial objective of the project. The process also provides the participants with an important opportunity to share their work and learn from each other and is a vital part of workshop interaction.

The process of discussing and editing photographs, talking through ideas of what these images communicate in relation to the broader theme, and generating different types of text to accompany the images is what makes this kind of project much more than a photography course. It introduces concepts of selecting and critiquing photos for their technical merits but also – and often more importantly – because of the power that particular images have to communicate to audiences.

Getting back the first prints in a project can be incredibly exciting for participants. Often, laughter and squealing and running around ensues! When this happens it is best just to allow everyone to look through all their work and wait for them to settle down. Often it is a really nice part of the project to document.

Find a way to lay out all the pictures or a selection of the pictures so that everybody can see them. **Create exercises** to generate discussion with the whole group. For example:

- Participants select their five favorite images and lay them out on a table
- Everyone walks around the table until you say 'stop'
- Everyone picks up one of the images in front of them, finds out whose it is and asks the photographer why they like it

Remember that in some cultures there is less value placed on individual authorship, so it may not be a priority for participants to identify which images are technically “theirs”.

Another exercise:

Choose a single image and invite participants to shout out single words that come to their mind when looking at it. Then ask them to think of sentences or stories inspired by the image. The imagined stories can be contrasted with the photographer talking about their original intention with the image. Resulting discussions can focus on how images communicate stories, feelings and meanings.

Of course every group will respond differently and individuals will differ in how much they contribute to discussions. Some young people may find it difficult at first to articulate why they like a photograph, answering “I just do!” or “It’s pretty!” – but older groups may be very articulate.

As project advances, participants will also normally become more comfortable talking about their images. The group can look at certain images or series of images and discuss whether the photos have achieved what they set out to do.

Whenever possible, link discussion of images back to any advocacy goals for the project.

Images can be discussed in an emotional or advocacy context: what does the image convey, or what effect might the image have on the viewer?

Individuals will always read photographs in different ways, and discussing a photo will become an interesting learning experience for participants.

Use your imagination throughout the project to find creative ways to generate discussion both about the photographs and the central theme of the project. Encourage discussion at all times – but if someone really doesn’t feel like talking, don’t push them.

Working with text

Text is a powerful tool to contextualize images, and producing it encourages participants to focus. The use of text enables participants to draw audiences further into their worlds.

Text can be purely factual or an additional creative element in the final work.

Text should be developed as images are produced and not left to the last moment. Structure workshops so that participants begin to see image and text

working hand in hand. Organize **exercises** around this idea, show the participants a photograph that you have brought to the workshop and ask them to write a caption for the image. Discuss the various captions the participants have come up with.

Where literacy levels are low, working with text is harder but not impossible. It may be appropriate for participants to tell their stories orally. Videotape, record audio or just take notes (use your team mates here) when participants are talking about their images. These notes can then be turned into captions and other text, which participants can approve or amend. Participants can also work in pairs, perhaps interviewing each other about their work to generate text.

Captions

The power of an image can be dramatically increased by a strong caption. Captions may include details about where and when the picture was taken and of whom – the subjects name may give additional strength and intimacy to a photograph and can be used if appropriate.

However, captions can do more than simply explain non-visual elements of the picture.

Strong captions tell the viewer something about the photographer's intentions or what a photograph means to them emotionally and enable the audience to empathize.

Biographies and quotes

Creating biographical photo stories and writing biographies can be a very powerful way of exploring the central theme or issue in a project.

Even when participants choose not to focus on biographical representation in their own work, portraits and accompanying text about the participants' lives usually add a great deal to an exhibition of their work.

The participants must consent to this kind of exposure and not be pressured to represent themselves in ways they feel uncomfortable with.

Structure the workshops to include basic biographical writing. Discuss as a group what sorts of things participants would like to say about themselves and the different ways they can present themselves.

It can be interesting for the participants to write something about themselves at the beginning of the project and then re-write their biography at the end. The difference between the two can be testament to the confidence and self-esteem they have gained. **[See M&E section]**

Digital storytelling

Digital storytelling combines images, audio and sometimes video to create narratives. It can produce strong results.

If you have access to video and audio equipment/expertise amongst your teammates you might want to record interviews and related story scripts that the participants have written themselves. Also document the workshops and photographers working on the assignment.

We might be able to combine the various mediums and put together a multilingual multimedia piece upon everyone's return.

III. WORKSHOP FACILITATION

This project is about bringing fun and creativity to the exploration of serious issues and enabling participants to learn the necessary skills to communicate with others.

The facilitation of the workshops is what makes this process possible. The participants are central to the process as the project is, ultimately, a vehicle for them to educate others about their lives and the lives of their peers. Without the commitment of the participants and their full participation, the project cannot be successful.

This project uses some interactive teaching, and a large measure of facilitation:

Interactive teaching

Interactive teaching encourages the active participation of students and is based on the belief that their ideas and existing knowledge are an important resource. It makes use of games and other experiential learning techniques, as facilitation does, but presupposes that the teacher possesses particular knowledge and skills that the learners do not possess i.e. basic technical photographic training in this case.

Facilitation

The process of facilitation, in contrast to interactive teaching, does not assume that the facilitator has more relevant knowledge than the participants. Facilitation is the process of generating ideas within a group with the vital premise that the participants bring those ideas with them.

In participatory photography projects it is the participants themselves who are in the most knowledgeable position to talk about their lives, their views, the photographs they have taken and what they want their photographs to convey.

The facilitator's role in participatory photography projects is:

- to enable participants to discover the power of photography as a tool for communication and how they can harness this potential to communicate their own stories and ideas
- to encourage participants to consider who their audiences will be and how their images will be received

- most importantly, to encourage them to believe in the importance of their voice and the value of their way of seeing

The role of the facilitator can be fraught with ethical issues, usually arising from the tension between the dynamics of the participatory process and the desire for a good-quality end product. It is very important not to push a particular 'way of seeing' onto the participants.

The facilitator needs to create space for participants to find their own ways of using the camera while ensuring that a certain standard of work is produced within a timeframe.

In advocacy projects a key function of the facilitator is to enable participants to frame their images in a language that will be comprehensible to the audiences they are targeting. The facilitator has to build a bridge between two ways of seeing and understanding. But the underlying assumption remains that the group is the creator of the ideas produced.

Obviously, the facilitator must never assume ownership over the participants' work or compromise it in any way. The key element is collaboration. The relationship that evolves is one of giving and taking, teaching and listening, and ultimately of sharing ways of seeing.

Through this two way process the facilitator learns as much as the participants, gaining first-hand insights into participants' lives, their culture and community.

Elements of good facilitation

Providing structure

- Offer activities that lead people logically through a learning process
- Set pace through structured learning exercises and assignments
- Focus participants on tasks and act as a time-keeper

Imparting new knowledge and skills

- Provide educational resources, such as written notes and images, and access to books and videos
- Organize excursions and/or invite speakers of interest
- Explain how to access other sources of information
- Answer participants' questions

Helping people recognize how much they already know

- Make sure participants know they are the 'experts' on their own lives
- Ask appropriate questions so as to draw participants out of themselves
- Encourage participants to draw creatively on their life experiences, their existing skills, and their ideas and opinions
- Impart enough information for individuals to form their own opinions and make informed decisions

Encouraging participation and sharing

- Be open and approachable yourself
- Encourage mutual respect in the group
- Encourage participants to interact with and learn from each other
- Present all sides of a situation or problem without making judgments
- Acknowledge the limitations of your own knowledge
- Identify key points in group discussions and summarize these for the group

Creating a safe and secure environment for participants and allowing risk-taking

- Build individual confidence and group rapport
- Ensure everyone understands the tasks and what is required of them
- Mediate any disputes that arise
- Encourage exploration

Providing an outside eye

- Monitor what the participants are doing both individually and as a group
- Encourage people to look at their own and others' work in new ways
- Express your own opinions about what does and does not work

Using appropriate communication techniques

- Use images and metaphors creatively to present new ideas
- Use learning activities that include a range of art forms and other techniques – remember that photographic skills are not necessarily the most important things taught in the project
- Be supportive but do not be afraid to challenge people when necessary
- Practice good listening skills
- Learn to identify the key points and summarize what others have said
- Project your voice
- Develop techniques that enable you to be comfortable speaking in front of groups
- Learn how to claim and hold the space

Self-awareness when facilitating

- Be aware of subtle or overt relations of power
- Recognize and understand your own 'triggers' – things that may lessen your ability to cope with certain situations or to be a good facilitator
- Be aware of your own cultural and social assumptions
- Know your strengths and weaknesses as a facilitator and be willing to learn
- Plan and be well prepared
- Be ready to think on your feet
- Be flexible

Participatory photography workshops can throw up all sorts of surprises and it may take time to gauge the speed or mood of the group you are working with. You will need constantly to appraise the suitability of activities and adjust the timetable where necessary – maybe introducing new activities, spending longer

on particular issues or letting go of others that no longer seem suitable. Use your intuition.

Group Dynamics

Points to remember:

- Notice those who are less confident and encourage them to speak about their work
- Some people will work much better in pairs or small groups than in the whole group
- When most members of a group are shy it may be that they are used to learning by rote, or that they think there must be a 'right' or 'wrong' answer. They may also have had negative experiences of education and discipline.
- Use active games, involving lots of fun
- Give plenty of encouragement and incentives for creative thinking and ideas
- Be patient

As a facilitator you may sometimes find it difficult to command respect from the group. This may be because of gender or age issues – for example in some societies people may not pay much credence to your views if you are much younger than they are or if you are a woman. If you find yourself out of your depth, seek advice and help from those that know the participants better than you, including staff of the partner organization.

Building trust

Trust is crucial in any participatory photography project but particularly so when you are working with vulnerable groups. As participants get to know each other and come to trust the facilitators they can begin to open up and entrust the group with stories they might not previously have been willing to share.

An understanding of confidentiality within the group is very important in these situations, as is the establishing of workshop boundaries.

The group dynamic in a project can be one of the most treasured outcomes of a project for groups or individuals who may lack other support, companionship or trustworthy relationships in their life.

On a cautionary note, if strong relationships based on trust are built up in the course of a project it is crucial to ensure this network can be sustained and that participants do not develop an emotional dependence on project staff. A project can do more harm than good if it builds up expectations that are not sustainable after the project ends.

Right to anonymity

Marginalized people are often victims of social prejudice and can, in some countries, risk persecution by the authorities or other with more social power. As speaking out and challenging prevailing social perceptions and power

structures carry serious risks, some people may wish to take part in a project while preserving their anonymity.

Knowing your boundaries

Working with marginalized and vulnerable people, especially in the context of a different culture, can be extremely testing. As facilitator, you are not required to be an art therapist, counselor or psychologist. It is very important to acknowledge the professional boundaries within which you work, as well as your personal boundaries. Turn to your teammates and partner organization for support and assistance.

Teaching materials and resources

Create your own resource pack of photographs

Over the course of the workshops you can expose participants to a wide range of photographic styles and explain how photography can serve many different purposes. Remember to be culturally and politically sensitive when selecting images to use:

- Cut out lots of images from newspapers and magazines and put them in folders, maybe by theme
- Photography books that you might be able to bring with you
- Booklets of postcards can also be fun to use in workshops
- Bring some snapshots of your own family, hometown etc. Remember you will be asking participants to take some 'personal photographs'. They will appreciate seeing photographs that are personal to you.

Certificates

Consider the idea of presenting participants with certificates during the final workshop – they can present to one another and say something positive to the person to whom they are giving the certificate.

It can be important as it gives participants something physical that represents all they have achieved in the project and that they can show to friends and family.

Prints

Important part of the project is to give each participant a full set of their own prints that they can take home and share with their families and friends.

These prints can be used in the workshop context. Rather than simply viewing a picture on a wall or on table, it can be less removed if prints are held in the hands of the participants and passed around or placed next to other prints etc.

Archiving and labeling

As soon as images are given back to the group, everyone should write their names on the back of photographs, plus ideally sequentially number them (match to negative #). Where participants take responsibility for labeling and ordering their own work, the process contributes to their sense of ownership of the images.

Check with your lab, sometimes they can automatically custom print on the back of pictures.

Use your teammates to help label the other two sets of prints so everything is consistent.

Documentation of workshop

Ensure that the workshops are documented visually, as well as with notes on the process.

Pictures of the project at work are really important for contextualizing the project for the general public, as well as other stakeholders.

Video is another great work to document workshops and participants working. Be mindful of anyone who needs to remain anonymous.

IV. POST-WORKSHOP IDEAS

Due to time and budgetary constraints, this phase of our project does not officially include a local exhibition or the such – our goal is to conduct the workshops in each location and get the images created. (if you can make this happen and your NGO supports this initiative while you are there – more power to you! Be sure to document so that it can shared with us.)

Phase 2 of the project, upon your return, will be to create advocacy materials based on the photography results. The details of this will be determined in part by your experiences and results from the summer. This section briefly covers some possibilities so that you can keep these issues in mind throughout this project.

Going Public

Local exhibitions enable participants to share their work with friends, family, the local community and local dignitaries, which gives them a strong sense of achievement, ownership and empowerment. Through exhibitions and events further afield, projects raise awareness of issues on a larger scale. Wherever possible, participants should play an active role in preparing for and co-coordinating exhibitions of their work. Participants should feel ownership of the editing process and the methods through which images are presented to public audiences.

Factors to consider:

- Budget
- Theme
- The work
- Venue
- Hanging
- Audience

- Dates
- Publicity
- The opening
- Evaluating the exhibition
- Participants' role in exhibition

Ideas include:

- A public exhibition, accompanying media campaign
- A small private exhibition for the participants may be more appropriate in some cases (i.e. sex workers); this can create a safe and secure environment for participants to share their thoughts and feelings with each other and a counselor from NGO; a high profile exhibition could be damaging rather than beneficial in some circumstances.
- Participant-made booklets of their words and images could be presented to government ministers if there is a specific advocacy angle
- Postcards/prints/calendar available for sale

Proceeds can either go to the project partner (usually always the case when participants are under 16 yrs old) or to the individual photographer. It is important for group to come to a consensus about this so it doesn't become an issue down the road.

- Photo slide show on You Tube that NGOs and participants can link to
- Encourage exchange of images and words within and between projects
- Use in advocacy campaign of the partner NGO

Be realistic about what the project can achieve! Ensure that outputs are appropriate.

Balancing objectives of different stakeholders

The project manager is ultimately accountable for the whole project and must be aware of all interested parties and the power dynamics that exist. The participants' objectives should be paramount, but in reality other stakeholders, particularly NGO staff, may have a very strong influence.

Differing priorities held by different project stakeholders may lead to serious tensions arising in a project. In advocacy projects, in particular, it is important to ascertain that the participants are interested in being involved in advocacy work and also that they are not compelled to produce images with a certain message. This of course would not be a participatory project.

Exhibitions can also be an ethical minefield – for example, an interest in producing and editing aesthetically pleasing 'exhibition quality' photos can potentially undermine what the participants themselves really want to say - balancing the various stakeholders' objectives is not a simple job but the project manager must ensure that the project is not compromised by any one party.

It is of crucial importance that the participants are aware of and in agreement with the project objectives, or better still are involved in setting or redefining the objectives themselves.

WHAT IF...

- One of the cameras does not work?
- The NGO is not supporting the project?
- You cannot find a photo lab in the vicinity?
- The lab cannot make a photo CD?
- The participants want to change the theme?
- I cannot find a translator?

**REMEMBER, THE FELLOWSHIP MONEY IS TO BE USED TO HELP YOU
CONDUCT THE PROJECT – SO USE IT!**

HAVE FUN – IT'S GOING TO BE GREAT!

IF YOU HAVE ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS BEFORE YOU LEAVE OR EVEN DURING THE IFP, PLEASE LET ME KNOW:

human being tea drinker photographer
editor creative director producer curator
consultant ambreen qureshi producer
photographer curator editor consultant
curator creative director producer editor
human being consultant photographer
editor ambreenq@gmail.com curator
curator editor 646 431 8002 consultant
photographer tea drinker human being