

“Photovoice research has opened my eyes to the plights and yearnings of people with stigmatizing skin diseases such as hydrocele, lymphatic filariasis, leprosy, and Buruli ulcer in society.”

- Afolayan James, Desk Officer at the Kwara State Ministry of Health

## WHAT IS IT

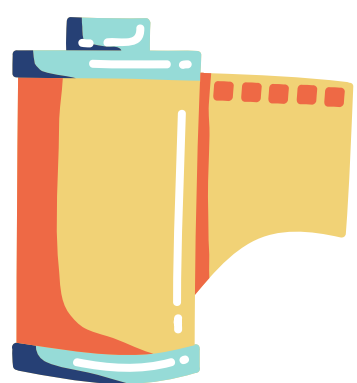
Photovoice is a participatory research strategy that allows people to identify, represent, and enhance their community through photographic techniques.<sup>1</sup>

The main goals of photovoice are to:

1. Enable people to express their community strengths and concerns
2. Promote dialogue surrounding personal and community issues
3. Bring change by reaching and influencing policymakers

## USE WITHIN NTDS

### *Record Experiences*



Locals can use photography to record their experiences with NTD interventions. The data collected can identify contextual challenges to improve program design.

### *Empower Communities*



Photovoice can amplify the voices of marginalized people. For example, COUNTDOWN's project trained people affected by skin NTDs to take photographs illustrating the social isolation, stigma, and mental burden from NTDs to community members and policymakers.<sup>2</sup>

## HOW TO USE IT

Photovoice projects depend on the people you are working with. General steps include:

### 1. Recruitment

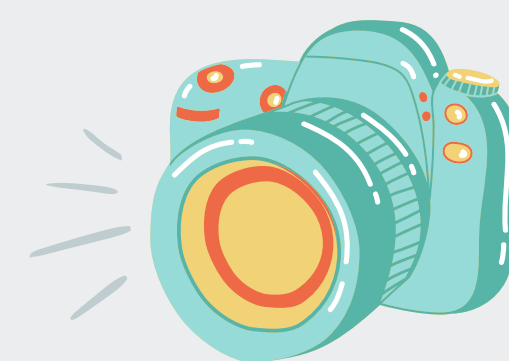
Sampling can range from 8-10 individuals with more than one community sampled.

### 2. Conducting initial interviews

Understand the participant's perceptions of the community and teach members how to operate the camera. Members should also be taught photography ethics during these sessions, including knowing who or whose private property that may appear in the photographs.

### 3. Taking the photographs

Provide participants with a time frame to take the photographs – ideally, a couple of days.



### 4. Follow up interviews

Participants describe their photos and select those meaningful to them. Group discussions allow others to provide feedback about how the pictures strike them, while individuals interviews can provide more detailed responses.

### 5. Summarize and present photos

Participants should know how the photos will be used and have the option to remain anonymous. Photographs can be shared through public exhibitions, press releases, or social media.

# KEY STUDIES



- *Skin Stories: Life through the lens of affected people in Kwara, Nigeria*  
<https://countdown.lstmed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/centre/COUNTDOWN%20Kwara%20Photovoice.pdf>
- *Photovoice and empowerment: evaluating the transformative potential of a participatory action research project*  
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-018-5335-7>
- *Photovoice as a Method for Revealing Community Perceptions of the Build and Social Environment*  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4933584/>

# WHY USE IT

Photovoice is used as a participatory needs assessment tool that can describe community inventory, context evaluation, diagnostic evaluation, or process evaluation.

Its rich visual data describing social and behavioural settings from community members provides unique perspectives often overlooked by researchers and policymakers. However, researchers should keep in mind that photography can be subjective and that narratives can be misinterpreted. Participants should be made aware of these risks before engaging in photography initiatives.

Photovoice	
BENEFITS	CHALLENGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Insight into social and behavioural settings</b> Researchers can learn from the experiences of people who lead lives different from those traditionally in control of photography.</li><li>• <b>Participant Empowerment</b> Provide a sense of ownership and honours local knowledge.</li><li>• <b>Visual Research</b> Combining narrative and visual depictions can better capture lived experiences. Images are powerful tools that are recognized beyond language, culture, and literacy levels.</li><li>• <b>Learning Photographic Techniques</b> Participants are likely interested to participate in photography</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Misrepresent a participant’s narrative</b> Who used the camera, what the user chose not to photograph, who translated the data, can intervene with representation</li><li>• <b>Resource Intensive</b> Teaching photographic techniques and providing cameras requires human and financial resources. The cameras may be misused for research related activities or broken.</li><li>• <b>Subject to subjective experience</b> Photographs can be influenced by a participants’ personality or mood at the time of data collection.</li><li>• <b>Invading Privacy</b> May face refusals where communities think that their privacy is intruded</li></ul>



# CHANGING THE PERSPECTIVE

## Photovoice in NTD Research

PHOTOS RETRIEVED FROM: [https://countdown.lstmed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/centre/COUNTDOWN Kwara Photovoice.pdf](https://countdown.lstmed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/centre/COUNTDOWN%20Kwara%20Photovoice.pdf)<sup>2</sup>



"I took this photo because of what disturbs me. I have been separated from my family by other family members and was given a different room away from everyone. I am not allowed to sit in their midst and have conversations or be involved in discussions."

**Aliyu Ysufu,**  
(Affected by Buruli ulcer)

"I can no longer go to the market to trade and this makes me unhappy when the thoughts come in that I can't go to buy or sell because I am to care for a sick brother."

This photo of books shows my inability to study or school due to being the one to look after my brother"

**Yusuf Zango**  
(Caregiver of Tanko Mohommed who is affected by Lymphedema)



## REFERENCES

1. Wang C. Photovoice: A Participatory Action Research Strategy Applied to Women's Health. J Women's Heal [Internet]. 1999 Mar 1;8(2):185–92. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1089/jwh.1999.8.185>
2. COUNTDOWN. Skin Stories: Life through the lens of affected people in Kwara, Nigeria [Internet]. 2020. Available from: [https://countdown.lstmed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/centre/COUNTDOWN Kwara Photovoice.pdf](https://countdown.lstmed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/centre/COUNTDOWN%20Kwara%20Photovoice.pdf)
3. Wang C, Burris MA. Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. Heal Educ Behav. 1997;24(3):369–87.