



**PHOTOVOICE AS AN ADVOCACY TOOL
KPANDO, GHANA - 2017**

Introduction

ResultsinHealth together with UNiTED Projects and Karijn Kakebeeke Consultancy conducted an assessment using the photovoice method. The method was used as an advocacy tool to voice the concerns of people living with disabilities (PLWD) and express their situation to fellow community members and authorities with the aim of opening the discussion for more and better support for PLWD. This fact sheet highlights the method used and gives insight into the obtained results.



Background

Since 2016 UNiTED has implemented the community led support group for people living with disabilities (PLWD). The project is aimed to empower PLWD by educating surrounding community members on disabilities and the resources available for them, the final goal being inclusion for PLWD.

ResultsinHealth together with Unifying Neighbors Through Education and Development (UNiTED) conducted an assessment of the project, using the photovoice method. This booklet highlights the method used and gives insight into the obtained results. Photovoice was used here as an advocacy tool to voice the concerns of the PLWD's and express their situation towards fellow community members and authorities with the aim of receiving more and better support for group members.

Often people with disabilities encounter difficulties in helping the able-bodied population to understand issues faced by persons with disability in the community. Our photographs provide visual evidence that help us to identify and address issues of accessibility in Kpando, Ghana. With our photographs we aim to educate the public, as well as those who have the political power to make changes in our communities.

In this booklet, we share the issues raised during our photovoice. A primary goal of disability advocacy is to identify actions that can improve community participation of people with disabilities. PWDs have little means to communicate their concerns to local decision makers. Photovoice is one way in which PLWD can raise their challenges with decision makers and relevant stakeholders. Photovoice allows for the creation of visual evidence of disabling or enabling situations in the community.

Method

Photovoice is a group analysis method often affiliated with participatory action research (PAR) that places cameras in the hands of “everyday” people. The photovoice method records the views of people living and coping with disability from their own point of view, thereby potentially acting as advocates for change in their communities. The resulting photographs provide evidence of life as experienced by the photographers and are a means to share their knowledge and experiences with others.

Whose voice was represented

Six participants were chosen by the members of UNiTED’s disability group to represent their group. Three criteria for participation were selected: (1) can commit full participation throughout the period; (2) enthusiastic about group work; and (3) willing to share their experiences with an outside audience.

The ‘audience’

The target audience of this photovoice project is district level decision makers.

Steps

- Providing context to the participants: explanation of the method and aim
- Explanation of the role of the photographer, tips and tricks, do’s and don’ts
- Basic photography training
- Fieldwork: taking pictures (data collection)
- Selection of pictures
- Placing pictures into context
- Categorizing pictures
- Preparation of exhibition/ presentation/ dissemination/evaluation

The process

Once participants were selected, a workshop was conducted by a photovoice expert. The participants were introduced to the photovoice method, including topics like how to: use the camera, develop a research question, communicate with images, select photographs and make narratives with the selected photographs. Another key aspect of the training was the discussion of ethical issues that might arise, such as permission to photograph people and confidentiality. After this introduction, participants started collecting (photographic) data based on the research question.

Each participant made personal photos to answer the question. These were shared and discussed with the whole group. Participants made a first selection of seven photos. In communication with each other the pictures that answered the research question best were selected, which finally resulted in four photographs per participant. The participants developed a personal story and a description to effectively address the issue of the story. The SHOWeD method was used, applying the following questions:

S – What do you See happening here?

H – What is really Happening here?

O – How does this relate to Our lives?

W – Why does this situation, concern, or strength exist?

D – What can we Do about it?

Findings

Through several group discussions it became clear that participants especially felt misunderstood in their communities and wanted to use this photovoice workshop as an opportunity to address this issue. Together we were able to formulate our research question into:

‘what do you feel is most important for community members to understand about *your* situation?’

Participants went off into the field after having learned how to work the camera and after having been taught visual literature: how do images communicate and how to communicate with images? Participants then presented their photographs and narratives to the group to spark critical dialogue. The participants grouped the pictures together into categories that best expressed the issues of their concern. The categories chosen were: poverty, skills, limited independence, limited chances, future aspirations, capability, struggle, help and discrimination. Finally, the photographs with narratives were compiled and prepared for exhibition and dissemination.

On the following pages you see an impression of the images and stories they came back with. Next is a visual impression of the work process.

CATEGORIES AND IMAGES

POVERTY

Elizabeth

My house is not supposed to be this way. But because of my disability I'm poor and not making enough money to be able to repair it. I call my house a pontoon (ferry), because it leaks a lot and it's ugly. I feel sad and shy because of staying in such a house. I would like to tell the community that even though my younger brother sent me out of his house, I have been able to put up this structure to live in.



Patience

Today I do not feel well, so I decided to lie down. My pain is not always so bad that I have to lie down. It is only once a month that this happens. But it does disturb me, because it will mean I am not able to sell.



Patience

Here you see that I've set up the market, but I am not there. I had to leave the market and lie down, because I did not feel well. My daughter is in school and my mother is always busy. In this situation, I don't earn any income that day. This happens about once a month. When I lie down in the room, people knock on my door to come and buy. At times to I will direct them to buy for themselves and bring me the money. It is important for people around me to know that I face these difficulties and need help with the selling.



CATEGORIES AND IMAGES

SKILLS

Alex

I'm a mason, I can do this. I took this picture to show others what I can do. If someone needs help to build, they can ask me for help. I have the skills, but people do not come to me for work and most of the time there is no work. And if people contract me to work, they find it difficult to work with me. A boss should have patience with me in order to understand me and he should have patience to I can explain my situation.



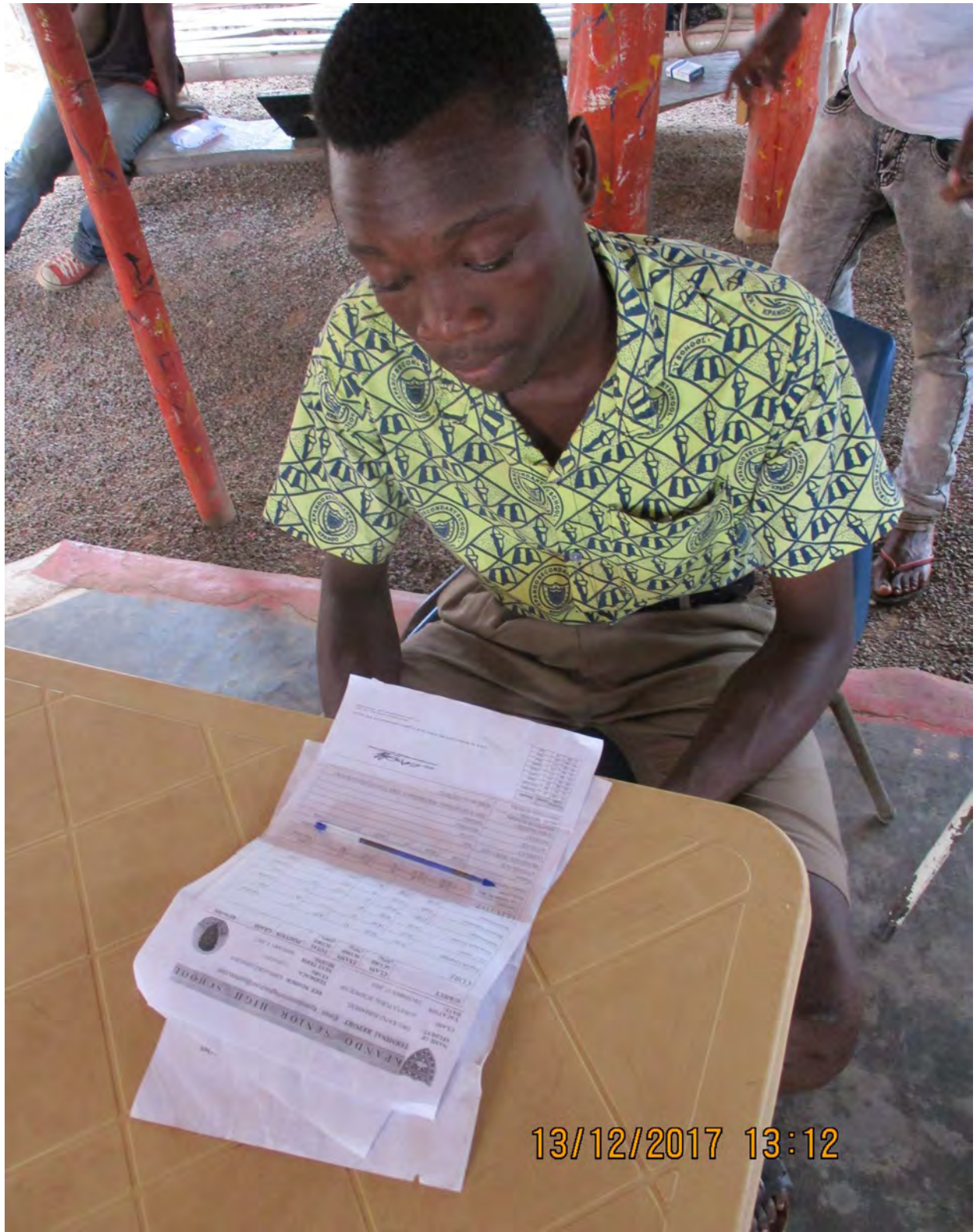
Emmanuel

I want to show that even though I am physically challenged I can still do things myself, help myself. When, for example, I am on the road and my motorbike breaks down, I can fix it myself. Due to my situation I cannot sit idle, I have to try and do things on my own.



Emmanuel

Although I am physically challenged, I am educated. When I was in school, people would discriminate me. People laughed at me, but I was able to comply. People in my situation are mocked a lot and many people might stop with school. People maybe expected to do the same. People might have not known me during my education and might think I am just a useless person, but I am rather educated. I would like to show that I am not only educated, I am capable.



13/12/2017 13:12

Magdalene

When children come to me at my house I remember how I used to be a teacher. I write on the ground for them when they come around. I like to hold their hands and teach them how to write on the ground. This is how I make myself happy and it helps me to worry less about my struggles. I would like the community to see that despite my physical condition my mind is still good.



13/12/2017

CATEGORIES AND IMAGES

LIMITED CHANCES

Alex

This picture means two things. It shows a car that transports sand for building. I want to show that I am able to fetch the sand into the car. This will help me to earn some money for a living, even when there is no mason work. I also want to show this picture because staying in my own community is easier for me. When I travel outside my community, communication becomes more difficult and people show less understanding and patience.



CATEGORIES AND IMAGES

LIMITED INDEPENDENCE

Elizabeth

Even though I am disabled, I don't have to beg to make a living. That is why I force myself to go to farm so I can feed myself. I would like to show the community that even though I'm physically challenged, I'm still independent.



Alex

I'm a farmer. That is what I do for a living. I farm cassava and yam. I've made my farm large enough so people can come and buy goods from me. I feed myself from the farm as well. By showing this picture, I want to show to abled people that they can also do this. I've become independent because of farming even though I'm disabled. Others can also do this.



CATEGORIES AND IMAGES

FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

Elizabeth

I really like the way this house looks. If I were to stay in such a house, the roof would not leak and I would be so happy. I want community members to know that as a human like them, I deserve the best, just like them.



Elizabeth

One day when I cannot farm anymore, I could still sit in one place and be selling in a shop. This is what I would like to do in the future. I would prefer to have my own store. I want people to understand that I 'm not a lazy person.



Patience

I was a business woman who traveled around and sold items. Due to my accident four or five years ago I am unable to do this now. If I would have a container like this, I would not have to set up my store on the road side every day. Inside the container the things are arranged very well. If it is like this, you do not have to pack the things every day and send them home. I would also not have to ask my mother or daughter to bring the things from the house and arrange them for me. I hope to get help from somebody to set up the container or buy the items to sell. If I need items to restock the store, I can send somebody to buy and arrange them.



CATEGORIES AND IMAGES

CAPABILITIES

Elizabeth

I was carrying the fetched rice when I fell. This happens often because the ground is mushy in this area. Because of my disability I lose balance and fall. I use my bamboo stick to get up. I always bring a bamboo walking stick along. I find it difficult to get up again. I want to show my independence, to show that I'm still working hard to survive on my own. Despite being physically challenged. Actually, I need help, but I haven't found it yet.



Patience

This picture is for people to see that even when I am in pain I cook for myself and others in my family. Some people think that through my accident I am not able to do anything anymore, but I actually I am.



CATEGORIES AND IMAGES

STRUGGLE

Magdalene

I did not have a waist problem in the past. It developed a few years ago. I take care of myself. I wash, I cook, I sweep a little and that is how I manage my life. You can see that I hang the laundry that I just washed. Though I feel pains when I do this, I manage to hang the clothes on the line. It is very difficult for me and after this I go to bed to rest. When the clothes are dry I try to get someone to take them off the line. If I do not get anyone I do it myself. Community members know I did not have a back problem in the past. They see that I suffer now, but am still able to help myself. I need help and appreciate any help that comes to me in this situation. If I have help I worry less.



Magdalene

When I am hungry I set fire to cook. Community members need to know that I cook for myself, but that I suffer when I cook, because I cannot stand up properly. That is why everything I need in the kitchen, all utensils to cook, are at an arm-length away from me. Though I am in pain, I am still the one who cooks for me. I do it, because I have to. I actually need help to cook, but I don't have any.



Patience

I have difficulties to lift things because due to the accident one of my thighs is not functioning well. I find it difficult to lift items from the ground to my head. It is painful as well. I would like community members to know how I suffer and for them to understand that I might need help to lift things.



Magdalene

When I come home from town I am so so tired that it is really difficult climb the steps. I need help from someone to open the door for me. When I do not get any assistance, I sit and rest for a while on the stairs before I climb. This situation can happen twice a week. I would like the community members to be benevolent to help me in such situations. At this moment people only come when I call them to help. I need help more regularly, but I have not asked anybody to do this. I feel like I disturb people if I ask for help all the time; I also think people will frown their faces if I do this.



CATEGORIES AND IMAGES

HELP

Alex

I'm speaking to this woman and she doesn't understand me. It is difficult for me that most of the time when I speak to people, they do not understand me. This is what I'm suffering from. Others might have the same problem. If I meet a person, I'd like them to take more time and patience to understand me and my situation.



Emmanuel

Because of my disability I am unemployed but my sister is ready to give me a helping hand. When I need food, she is there for me. Community members need to know about this. The way they think about me is not the same as how my family members think about me. My family members know when I need help and give me this help. I would like community members to also treat me this way.



Magdalene

These are the medications I take. There are pain killers and ointments for my back (waist) pains. I have to take four different medications three times a day, every day. It is important for community members to know that this is how I have been living. I would like community members to understand my sickness and pain, as it is not good to be sick.



13/12/2017

CATEGORIES AND IMAGES

DISCRIMINATION

Emmanuel

I was trying to eat with my colleagues but they stopped me from putting my hand in the bowl because of my situation. I feel very sad when people do this. Community members should know that it is not fair to discriminate. The community should educate everyone that people with and without disabilities are all the same, we are equal, we are all people.



Emmanuel

People normally reject offers given with the left hand. Some people understand my situation and know I have to use my left hand, whilst others do not. I can say “sorry to use my left” to people. Due to discrimination, I have to think twice to give something with my left hand as I might be rejected. At times, I’m not fast enough to make the right decision and people reject me.



Alex

I'm speaking to the man, but he is not understanding me. Therefore, the person is telling me to go away. There are people who do not have patience with me. They don't take time for me to explain what I'm trying to say. I feel very sad when someone sends me away.



THE PROCESS

A VISUAL IMPRESSION

















Conclusion

Photovoice provides an efficient method that allows an insight into the lives of people who often cannot communicate their experiences via more traditional research methods. Photovoice has the potential to express the voices of vulnerable communities regarding their needs and can help them dialogue with local decision makers to inform community policy and planning.

ResultsinHealth 





Results
inHealth
Evidence, Innovation
and Practice

