Introduction

This resource is designed to introduce organisations who advocate on behalf of marginalised or issue-affected communities to an effective tool for involving their beneficiaries in the development and implementation of effective advocacy campaigns. The development of this resource has been funded by the international charity World Vision as part of the See it Our Way project.

PhotoVoice has over 10 years of experience designing and delivering participatory photography projects in partnership with organisations of vastly different scales and focused on a huge variety of social issues. Whatever the issues involved, participatory photography has proven to be a versatile and powerful tool in both meaningfully engaging beneficiaries and reaching those stakeholders who can impact positively on their situation. This reflects the dual power of photography on which PhotoVoice as an organisation is founded. The act of learning the art of photography and turning the lens onto one’s life or context creates opportunities to explore, study and communicate issues, while the resulting photographs can be powerful and versatile tools for conveying evidence, messages and calls to action to those who can make a difference.

Between 2009 and 2011, PhotoVoice has delivered two advocacy-focused projects in partnership with World Vision. The first, Youth as Agents for Change - Direct Voices, involved young people in communities affected by HIV/AIDS in St Petersburg, Russia and Bosnia Herzegovina. Through workshops run by PhotoVoice facilitators and supported by local World Vision staff, a group of HIV Positive young people in St Petersburg and a group of young people from a Roma community in Bosnia Herzegovina were given the skills and guidance to document the issues around HIV/AIDS that they considered important and relevant. The second, See it Our Way, involved groups of young people in communities affected by child trafficking across Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Case studies and evidence have been provided from these and other PhotoVoice projects as appropriate throughout this resource, and a more detailed report of the See it Our Way project, including a slideshow of images produced by the participants and lessons learnt from the process, is provided in the Project Case Studies section.

This resource is not intended to be a completely stand-alone guide to running a participatory photography project to compliment or define an advocacy project, as it cannot possibly deal with all the ethical and practical considerations that might be specific to a beneficiary group, or the complexities inherent in successfully facilitating a participatory photography workshop. Nor is this resource a handbook for the design and delivery of an advocacy campaign. This resource aims to show how participatory photography can add value and impact to an advocacy campaign, and to give clear practical pointers to how to go about planning and setting up such a project. Through this resource you will gain an understanding of what will be required in the way of equipment, time commitment and beneficiary involvement, and will have a clear idea of the potential pitfalls that can undermine the process so that they can be anticipated and minimised. Other resources and documents from PhotoVoice and other organisations are signposted in the links and resources section where they provide more in-depth detail about aspects of participatory photography workshops or advocacy.

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