THE POWER OF PHOTOS:

Experiences from Zimbabwe's Emergent Urban Settlement

Kudzai Chatiza, Tariro Nyevera, Desmond Bhobho, and Takudzwa Musekiwa

Table of Contents

Abbreviations

DARE	Department of Architecture and Real Estate
DEGI	Development Governance Institute
IUI	Inclusive Urban Infrastructure
UZ	University of Zimbabwe
YCC	Young Community contacts
UKRI	UK Research and Innovation
GCRF	Global Challenges Research Fund
LPG	Liquefied Petroleum Gas

CHAPTER 1: METHODOLOGY: EXPERIENCES FROM ZIMBABWE

1.1 About the Inclusive Urban Infrastructure Project

The Development Governance Institute (DEGI) is co-investigating Inclusive Urban Infrastructure (IUI) issues. The investigation is under a University of Sussex coordinated research project[1]. Research activities are being carried out in the cities of Harare (Zimbabwe's capital) and Masvingo. In the former four (4) settlements are being studied while in the latter two (2) were selected. In total, 6 Zimbabwean settlements in the two cities were purposively selected for the study.

The Harare settlements are Budiriro 5B Extension, Churu Farm, Hatcliffe Extension and Hopley while for Masvingo the study focuses on Old Mucheke and Victoria Ranch. IUI research's aim is understanding how marginal and underserved settlements design, deliver and maintain relevant infrastructure and services. Focus is on 6 infrastructure grids of water, sanitation, energy, housing, transport and communication.

The specific research questions for the IUI project are:

i. How are the key infrastructures of housing, and water accessed?
ii. How do systems of provision vary between the two key services?
iii. How can provision be equitably extended to residents currently excluded?

The table below shows the suite of methods used by the study overall.

Table 1: Core IUI Research Methods

Core Method	Description
Community Profiling and Engagement	These allow knowledge co-production where residents of emerging settlements are directly involved through focus group discussion (FGD) sessions, qualitative resident interviews and organised dialogue meetings.
Stakeholder Interviews	This involves stakeholder mapping (agents, and organisations) regarding their roles in shaping the context for and actual systems of infrastructure and service provision. Actual data gathering methods included semi-structured intervies and policy seminars.
Household Surveys	A baseline and follow-up (panel) household survey. The baseline survey (July 2021) covered some 3000 respondents and will be followed up in April-May 2023 by a panel survey targeting 10% of households covered by the baseline survey.
Photovoice	*Photovoice method was used to capture resident visualisations and expressions of their infrastructure/service experiences within their settlements.*
Comics	A narrative script focused on water grid experiences in one of the settlements (Hopley) was adapted into a comic story to deepen understanding of key issues.
Literature Review	Published and grey literature

1.2 About this Publication

This publication is at once a reflection on photovoice methodology by the Zimbabwe IUI research team and a repository of some of the photos taken as part of the research. It pesents some findings and reflects on

---

experiences related to applying the methodology including the adaptations done by the Zimbabwe team. Key lessons are then drawn and shared. Regarding organization, the publication has five sections. These are as follow:

i.   Introduction of the research project and the photovoice method.
ii.   Review of Photovoice Methodology
iii.   Field application of the methodology in Zimbabwe
iv.   Outputs of the photo voice process (photos)
v.   Synthesis and Conclusion

Photovoice methodology yields very rich data. Communities, the research team and different audiences engaged using the photos benefit from the messaging by those who take and explain the photos as well as members of the community.

The DEGI team extended the method to young residents of the study settlements. This was over a six week period mediated through conversations on a What'sApp platform. Photos taken and pasted onto the platform were followed up with site specific and cross-site explanations and reactions. These conversations were lightly facilitated by the DEGI researchers and focused on fostering discussions on social change, community engagement and awareness raising regarding community resources and the efficacy of community responses to issues of infrastructure/service provision.

Rich insights emerged for the research team from observing, lightly facilitating discussions on photos and stories told by young people and coordinating exhibitions. Zimbabwean researchers combined both community members not involved in taking photos and those who took the photos. At the time of writing this reflection, the use of photos taken with local authority and other stakeholders had not been done. The three uses of photovoice are i) a research approach, ii) a pedagogical tool and iii) a partnership-building device that Latz et al (2016) observed and became apparent to the Zimbabwe research team.

CHAPTER 2: A REVIEW OF PHOTOVOICE METHODOLOGY

2.1. Origins of Photovoice

The method was first introduced by Wang and Burris in the late 1990s (Wang and Burris, 1997). It was built from a 'photo novella', which is more of digital story telling (Liebenberg, 2018). This meant that the method was needed to promote a process of community participation that was analytical, proactive and empowering. As a result, photovoice became a community based participatory research method (Wang and Burris, 1997). Through photovoice, individuals use the power of the photos to narrate their everyday experiences using their own voices (Sutton-Brown, 2014). The community members participating in the photovoice act as co-researchers because they take the photographs and interpret their meaning for researchers (Latz *et al*, 2016).

2.2 Uses of Photovoice

The combination of images and words is the heart of photovoice (Krieg et al, 2009). Photovoice participants are given cameras and asked to document various aspects of their lived experiences through photography. By doing that, the method allows photographs taken by research participants to be used to explore and address community needs, stimulate individual empowerment and create a critical dialogue to advocate for change (Latz *et al*, 2016). Using photos allows residents (the photographers) to have a voice that is reinforced by the visuals bringing to attention the issues that concern them (Wang and Burris, 1997). Participants narrate the personal significance of the images taken. This is in support with the saying that 'a picture is worth more than a thousand stories' whose origins and attribution is contested (Banard 1921, Brisbane 1911, Turgenev 1862).

Photovoice combines photos with social change. It entails production of photographs to facilitate joint reflection on everyday experiences of groups that have always been marginalized from social science research and political processes (Sutton-Brown, 2014). Proponents of photovoice drew from the 'critical consciousness' concept regarding the importance of voice and the power of photography as an agent for social change (Latz *et al*, 2016). The three primary goals of photovoice are to i) amplify unheard voices, ii) encourage critical consciousness and iii) influence policy makers to make changes that improve and enhance living conditions (Liebenberg, 2018). The process of photovoice helps participants to uncover, clarify and strengthen the voice that they already have (Wang and Burris, 1997).

The method has over the years been modified by social scientists to suit their unique environments. Some have included additional steps, while others have skipped some (Adams and Nyantakyi-Frimpong, 2021). This modification contributed to the adaptation of the method across other social science domains. For instance, some may include reflection meetings involving only the residents who took the photos. Others engage with policy makers with the hope of influencing change (Padilla et al, 2019).

Photovoice resonates with some feminist theoretical frameworks. This indicates that power accrues to those with voice and who participate in decisions (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). The method is an empowering tool for communities because it shifts power from official decision makers to affected communities for whom decisions are often made. It allows an individual's subjective experiences to be heard, in a way that shifts power making it more evenly distributed (Bandauko & Arku, 2023).

2.3 Criticisms of photovoice

The method is not without its criticisms. It is often criticized for lacking a social action plan (Short, 2006, Gosselink, 2007, Nowell, 2006 & Strack 2000). This negatively impacts marginalized communities or any other groups by leaving them feeling objectified because of lack of follow through (Kuratani & Lai, 2022). Again, the method is criticized as a 'quick and use' replacement method which can lead to its misuse unlike the long term engagements and immersions in fieldwork contexts. Therefore, photovoice in and of itself cannot achieve intended results in terms of social change. In the context of the current (IUI) study it was used as part of a broader suit of methods that complimented it. Through careful consideration of the insights generated from photovoice alongside data from other methods a more nuanced image regarding infrastructure and services emerged. Ensuring that resources and capacity to effectively support meaningful community engagement throughout the research and results dissemination process exist (Liebenberg et al, 2017) is something the research project has built in.

CHAPTER 3: FIELD APPLICATION OF THE METHODOLOGY IN ZIMBABWE

Three main sub-activities were used in the implementation of photovoice. These were i) residents taking photos (*resident-photographers*), ii) young community contacts (YCC) taking photos and generating stories and iii) community members, researchers and resident-photographers discussing the captured photos.

3.1. Residents taking photos

Thirty (30) residents were selected from the 6 settlements to take photos. Five residents were selected from each settlement. Their selection was based on their participation in other IUI research activities (FGD sessions, resident interviews and the household survey) and their knowledge of the settlement. Resident participation in this process was made possible by the community contact persons. In each settlement, there were at least one contact person acting as a referral point for the research team. Training sessions were organized for all 30 selected residents in three batches, two in Harare and one in Masvingo in June 2022. Emphasis during the training was on research objectives, questions, and ethics.

Photovoice participants took photos that best represented their lived experiences and realities within their communities. The main focus was on housing and water. However, participants were also encouraged to take photos relating to sanitation, energy, communication, and transport capturing images speaking to both positive and negative experiences. Contact persons were a referral point on any fieldwork challenges faced by the resident-photographers during photo-taking. The process of taking photos took 4 days. Each participant selected 5 photos which they found meaningful in terms of communicating their experiences and issues. It is on these resident selected photos that resident-photographers were interviewed sharing their reflections on both photos and their experiences. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants to discuss the meaning of the photos they took using the SHOWED technique. The technique has 5 questions which are:

i.   What do you/we **S**ee here/in the photo?
ii.   What is really **H**appening here?
iii.   How does this relate to **O**ur lives?
iv.   **W**hy does this problem, resource or situation exist?
v.   How can this image **E**ducate others, the community and policy makers?
vi.   What can we **D**o about it?

3.2. Photos by Young People

The Development Governance Institute (DEGI) engaged sixteen (16) Young Community Contacts (YCC) from the study's 6 settlements. Budiriro 5 Extension and Hatcliffe Extension had 2 YCCs per settlement, while the other 4 settlements had 3 each. A virtual training for the YCC assignment was conducted in July 2022. This was followed by two city-based physical meetings in Masvingo and Harare. In both the vittual and in person meetings the youth were introduced to the project, ethics of taking photos and generating stories. For stories, a complete story around a photo needed clarity on i) an issue, ii) the people involved and iii) the issue location. Additionally, the youth were encouraged to use a collaborative process to generate and complete stories. This involved settlement-based agreement on issues to focus on and joint discussions after taking photographs. Issue identification also involved mapping the locations to be covered. The youths engaged with community members to deepen understanding on settlement issues as needed.

A WhatsApp group was created for the youths to post their photos and stories as well as updates once a week, on a Monday. During the rest of the week, the WhatsApp group was muted for conversations. This process went on for three (3) months afterwhich a reflection meeting was held. The meeting allowed i)

reflecting on data gathered ii) consolidating new skills gained and iii) understanding processes brought about in the community.

3.3. Mixed Group Mini-Exhibitions

Two mini-exhibitions were held in Harare and Masvingo. This was part of applying photovoice both as a methodology and pedagogy. As Chio and Fandt (2007) argue photovoice as a pedagogy effectively i) diminishes the differences research tends to accentuate between experts and non-experts, ii) ameliorates the tendency for diversity learning to draw attention to differences and objectify differentiations, iii) provides a vehicle to afford participants authorship and agency, and iv) provides a compelling, critically reflective experience wherein those involved think and rethink their engagements with self and others.

Figure 1: Exhibitions, Masvingo and Harare


Photo exhibition Participants in Masvingo

Photo exhibition Participants in Harare

Photo presentation Victoria Ranch, Masvingo

Photo presentation, Budiriro 5B extension, Harare

Exhibition participants involved residents who took photos, YCC, community members, contact persons, the DEGI team and lecturers[2] convening to discuss and share ideas on the photos. Twenty five (25) participants attended the Harare exhibition and for Masvingo, seventeen (17) participants took part. The photo exhibition meetings were held at the, University of Zimbabwe (UZ) in Harare and Chevron Hotel in

---

[2] From the University of Zimbabwe's Department of Architecture and Real Estate (DARE) and Great Zimbabwe University's Department Rural and Urban Development
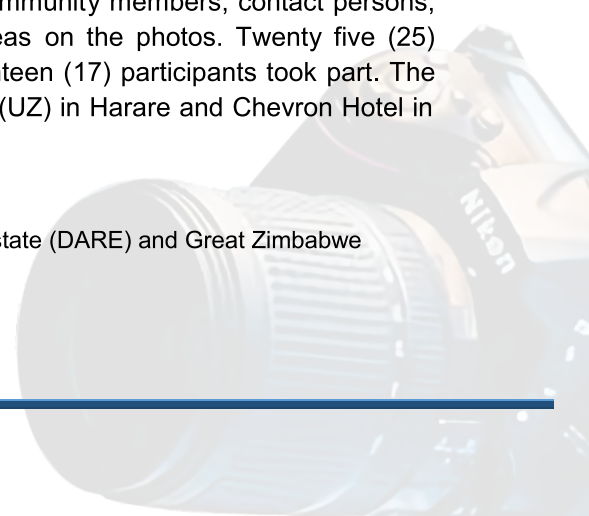
Masvingo. Focus of the photo exhibition was on the 6 study sites of the Inclusive Urban Infrastructure research project.

The exhibition allowed reflection on the lived experiences of communities based on the photos that were taken. Each settlement had 8 photos on display. The photos were from both the photovoice by residents and the YCC. For each settlement, the community members selected a representative to present the photos. The presentation for all settlements were followed by a plenary discussion. Participants used the photos to i) add their voices regarding the stories being portrayed ii) discuss the stories in the photos and iii) share ideas and possible ways of transforming their settlements. In some instances participants took advantage of the exhibition to update the meeting of developments since the photos were taken.

CHAPTER 4: OUTPUTS OF THE PHOTOVOICE PROCESS (PHOTOS)

4.1 Budiriro 5 Extension

Freedom Train

Photographer: Savior, Budiriro 5B Ext (July, 2022)

A road in Budiriro 5B

Photographer: Bernard Chigutei, Budiriro 5B Ext (July, 2022)

Rear of Informal Shops in Budiriro 5B Extension

Photographer: Bernard Chigutei, Budiriro 5B Extension (July 2022)

Chips Outlet

Photographer: Bernard Chigutei, Budiriro 5B Ext (July, 2022)

Private School

Photographer: Farai Munetsi, Budiriro 5B Ext (July, 2022)

Well

Photographer: Bernard Chigutei, Budiriro 5B Ext (July, 2022)

Housing Structures, Water Tanks and Electricity Poles

Photographer: Antony Moyo, Budiriro 5B Ext. (July, 2022)

Housing

Photograph by Savior, Budiriro 5B (July 2022)

Firewood

Photographer: Mavis, Churu Farm. (July, 2022)

Dumpsite

Photographer: Otilia, Churu Farm. (July 2022)

Toilet Soak way

Photographer: Mavis. Churu Farm. (July, 2022)

Dug Well

Photographer Otilia, Churu Farm. (July, 2022)

Saw-dust stove

Photographer: Shiela Nyamuranda. Churu Farm (July, 2022)

Rear of a marketplace in Churu Farm

Photographer: Otilia. Churu Farm (July, 2022)

Commercial building

Photographer: Shiela Nyamuronda, Churu Farm. (July, 2022)

Churu Primary School

Photograph by Taurai Mudzviti, Churu Farm (July, 2022)

Gravel Heap

Photographer: Praise. Hatcliffe Extension. (July, 2022)

Borehole and LP Gas outlet

Photographer: Lucia. Hatcliffe Extension. (July 2022)

Gravel Road in Hatcliffe Ext.

Photographer: Rodson Tondori, Hatcliffe Extension. (July, 2022)

Infrastructure Development

Photograph by Lucia, Hatcliffe Ext. (July 2022)

People fetching water at night

Photograph by Rodson Tondori, Hatcliffe Ext. (July 2022)

Toilet and Water tap

Photographer: Praise, Hatcliffe Ext (July 2022)

Metal scrap livelihood

Photographer: Collins, Hatcliffe Ext. (July 2022)

Streets in Hatcliffe Extension

Photograph by Collins, Hatcliffe Ext. (July, 2022)

Housing

Photographer: Lindsay. Hopley (July, 2022)

Brick Molding Livelihood

Photographer: Rachel Musademba, Hopley (July, 2022)

New Road in Hopley

Photographer: Rachel Mussademba, Hopley (July, 2022)

Dumpsite situated near a water point

Photographer: Gamuchirai Mudoti, Hopley. (July, 2022)

Solar powered water point

Photographer: Gamuchirai Mudoti, Hopley. (July, 2022)

Land degradation and land invasion

Photographer: Peter Mhosva, Hopley. (July, 2022)

Tariro Primary School

Photographer: Gamuchirai Mudoti, Hopley. (July, 2022)

Mbudzi Cemetery

Photographer: Peter Mhosva, Hopley. (July, 2022)

Urban renewal initiatives

Photographer: Germany Madzvova, Old Mucheke. (July, 2022)

Ablution facilities at Old Mucheke Rank

Photographer: Annalisa Ratambwa, Old Mucheke. (July, 2022)

Road Infrastructure

Photographer: Thandiwe Moyo, Old Mucheke. (July, 2022)

Communal WASH facilities

Photographer: Zumba Spiwe, Old Mucheke (July, 2022)

Gated house in Old Mucheke

Photographer: Gilbert, Old Mucheke, (July, 2022)

Homelessness

Photographer: Zumba Spiwe, Old Mucheke. (July, 2022)

Urban Renewal Initiatives

Photographer: Gilbert, Old Mucheke, (July, 2022)

Firewood Livelihood

Photographer: Germany Madzvova, Old Mucheke, (July, 2022)

Communal Water Point

Photographer: Eddington Makwanya, Victoria Ranch. (July, 2022)

Gated House in Victoria Ranch

Photographer: Hazel Runyowa, Victoria Ranch. (July, 2022)

Firewood

Photographer: Gwari Nemiah, Victoria Range. (July, 2022)

Roads in Victoria Ranch

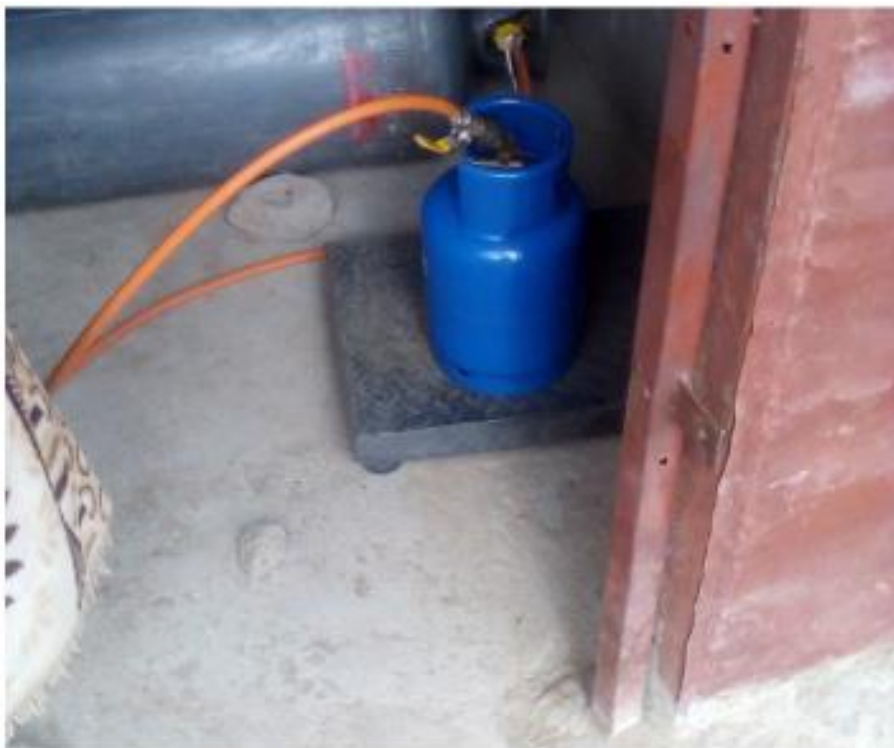*Photographer: Hazel Runyowa, Victoria Ranch. (July, 2022)*

Water source in isolated places

Photographer: Eddington Makwanya, Victoria Ranch (July, 2022)

LP Gas Outlet

Photographer: Gwari Nemiah, Victoria Ranch. (July 2022)

A road and heaps of sand.

Photographer: Ennie Gwatidzo. Victoria Ranch (July 2022)

Drawing water from pits

Photographer: Linia Masuka. Victoria Ranch (July, 2022)

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND SYNTHESIS

Reflections the photovoice exhibitions contributed greatly to the identification of key issues that determine the development of communities. It became clear from the exhibitions that residents can use photos to engage amongst themselves, with policy makers and other key development partners. Such engagements have traction in fostering change. This is because photos are interpreted in ways that allow different perspectives to be surfaced. The proverbial 'thousand words' do not obstruct consensus on meanings and possible actions. This is because photos depict infrastructure and service realities in details better than stories without photos more so if told by non-resident others.

Photovoice demonstrated that residents can use photos as a way to express their lived experiences. Two dimensions were clear from the Zimbabwe experiences. First, is the myriad stories that different viewers can derive. Second, entails residents explaining why they took photos and the main stories they want people to understand. The latter gives power to residents to effectively air their concerns. This is a first step towards ensuring that their preferred options for resolving issues raised become difficult to ignore.

When residents are involved in the process of taking photos, they are given leeway to decide what they want to take and the stories they want to attach to a particular photo. This is critical as it democratizes the research process. Residents are at liberty to take photos that reflect the issues they consider critical based on their experiences. This relates with Robert Chambers' book: *'Whose Reality Counts?: Putting the last first',* which talks about methodological revolution. The pedagogical nature of photovoice allowed both the researchers and the community participants to draw lessons from the research. By giving residents cameras to go in their settlements, residents became able to communicate their own issues, and reflecting on what they prioritise the most in their settlements.

The engagement of youths in generating stories and taking photos was also a useful exercise that triggered change in communities. Activities by YCC were acknowledged by residents in all six settlements. Residents valued the process considering the 'red flagging' approach it had to community issues. They considered the YCC activities as a surveillance process. For YCC, they felt the process helped stop some of the irregular land related activities people used to do in the community. This even led to some community members alerting the YCC of the activities they felt were irregular in the community. In some respects some 'new' resident power was generated.

The young community contacts gained new skills throughout the photovoice process. They benefitted with research skills, rapport building, exposure to development issues and confidence to champion development. Members of the community gained confidence and a sense of ownership of the developments of their settlements. Their awareness of development intitiatives they can or should champion on their own improved. At the same time the creation of platforms for residents to discuss and reflect on key issues within their settlements triggered some critical thinking and action planning. When people in the community discuss over an issue that is happening, they collectively think of lasting solutions. They evaluate their abilities against an issue that needs to be addressed. This is different from the way individuals may think or decide over a similar issue. The photovoice method enabled residents to collectively agree on the infrastructure gaps in the settlements. At the same time, possible solutions of addressing the challenges were discussed, including engaging with policy makers, collectively financing infrastructure repairs and guarding against infrastructure vandalism.

The photo exhibition resulted in participants reflecting on their roles in infrastructure development and service provision. Residents acknowledged that they had a key role to play in facilitating the development of their settlements. They had to do that in collaboration with local authorities for sustainability of their

interventions. The discussions showed that infrastructure self-provisioning methods were constrained especially on common services. These require involvement of public institutions.

Photovoice exercises can be easily made into a continuous settlement reflection and action process. Having a series of photovoice exhibition engagements helps community members to track infrastructure and service provision performance in their settlements. During the exhibition, participants were able to identify some of the settlement changes that occurred between the time photos were taken and the time of the exhibitions. A depository of photos exhibited can be used as a basis for monitoring settlement performance. Both positive and negative developments can be picked easily using photovoice. For the IUI research project outcomes of the photovoice process will be integrated with other research processes particularly policy seminars and dissemination of research results.

References

Adams, E. A., & Nyantakyi-Frimpong, H. (2021). Stressed, anxious, and sick from the floods: A photovoice study of climate extremes, differentiated vulnerabilities, and health in Old Fadama, Accra, Ghana. Health & Place, 67, 102500.

Bandauko & Arku, (2023). Fieldwork Experiences from Using Participatory Photo Voice. https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231154437

Brisbane, A. (1911). Speakers give sound advice. Syracuse Post Standard, 18.

Chio, V.C. and Fandt, P.M., (2007). Photo voice in the diversity classroom: Engagement, voice, and the "eye/I" of the camera. *Journal of Management Education*, *31*(4), pp.484-504.

Gosselink, C. A., & Myllykangas, S. A. (2007). The leisure experiences of older U.S. women living with HIV/AIDS. Health Care for Women International, 28, 3–20. doi:10.1080/07399330601001402

Krieg, B., Murdock, L. and Havelock, J., (2009). A Practical guide to photo voice: Sharing Pictures, telling stories and changing communities.

Kuratani, D. L., & Lai, E. (2011) Photo voice literature review. Los Angeles, CA; USC TYEAM Lab. Retrieved from http://teamlab.usc.edu/Photovoice%20Literature%20Review%20 (FINAL).pdf

Latz, A.O., Phelps-Ward, R., Royer, D. and Peters, T., (2016). Photo voice as Methodology, Pedagogy, and Partnership-Building Tool: A Graduate and Community College Student Collaboration. *Journal of Public Scholarship in Higher Education*, *6*, pp.124-142.

Liebenberg, L., (2018). Thinking critically about photo voice: Achieving empowerment and social change. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *17*(1), p.1609406918757631.

Nowell, B.L., S.L. Berkowrtz, Z. Deacon, P. Foster-Fishman. (2006). Revealing the cues within community places: stories of identity, history and possibility. Am. J. Community Psychol. 37(1-2): 29-46

Padilla, M., Matiz-Reyes, A., Colón-Burgos, J.F., Varas-Díaz, N. and Vertovec, J., 2019. Adaptation of PhotoVoice methodology to promote policy dialog among street-based drug users in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. *Arts & health*, *11*(2), pp.147-162.

Photo Exhibitions, (2022): Harare and Masvingo

Sutton-Brown, (2014): Photo-voice. A Methodological Guide. Photography and Culture, Volume 7, Issue 2.

Wang, C. and Burris, M.A., (1997). Photo voice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs *assessment. Health education & behavior, 24(3), pp.369-387.*

Wang & Redwood-Jones, (2001). Photo-voice Ethics. Perspectives from Flint Photo-voice. NIH. DOI: 10.1177/109019810102800504