

## PHOTOVOICE

CARE's Tipping Point initiative focuses on addressing the root causes of child, early and forced marriage (CEFM), by promoting the rights of adolescent girls through community level programming and evidence generation in Nepal and Bangladesh, and multi-level advocacy and cross-learning efforts across the globe. The [Tipping Point Phase 1 Vision of Change](#) demonstrates an iterative approach of learning and adaptation to promote social norms that support gender equitable opportunities.

Phase 1 (2013-2017) of this three-phase project used participatory feminist and developmental evaluation approaches as the basis of the monitoring, evaluation and learning framework. The evaluation drew upon multiple methods for assessing the project's contributions to changes at community and individual levels, including Photovoice,<sup>1</sup> a highly participatory method of evaluation that simultaneously builds skills and amplifies the participant's own voice. Tipping Point's experience with Photovoice is described in this brief for practitioners and researchers who may wish to apply this methodology to another evaluation or learning process.

### Methodology

Photovoice is a participatory research methodology where participants are asked to share their lives through an open-ended photographic documentation assignment. The goal is to put participants in the lead by asking them to identify what is important and choose how to present that subject for discussion and interpretation. In Tipping Point Phase 1 communities, the activity was conducted with two groups of adolescent girls and one group of mothers in Bangladesh, and two groups of adolescent girls and one group of adolescent boys in Nepal.

The community-based analysis conducted through Photovoice contributed to the qualitative evaluation of Tipping Point Phase 1. The photographs from the participants showed which activities were perceived to bring about change while also furthering program staff's understanding of the community as they designed Phase 2 programming.

**Table 1: Number of Photovoice Participants**

COUNTRY	ADOLESCENT GIRLS	ADOLESCENT BOYS	MOTHERS
Bangladesh	20 (2 groups of 10)	N/A	10
Nepal	22 (2 groups of 11)	11	N/A

## Overview of the Process

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5	STEP 6	STEP 7	STEP 8
Train project staff in Photovoice processes, consent and camera use.	Introduce the research method to local stakeholders, parents and authorities to raise awareness of the purpose and process.	Participants are trained on how to take pictures and get consent.	Participants are given cameras and assignment.	Mid-week focus group discussions with girls to explore initial pictures and provide second prompt.	Participants take photos and are asked to select 20 images, and narrow those to their 5 most important images.	Participants share why the images were important to them with captions documented.	Photographs and captions are analyzed for themes and trends related to the evaluation questions.

Before the community-level preparation and data collection began, Tipping Point staff participated in training covering data collection process, camera use, basic photography, and ethics. Then, CARE's Tipping Point team held workshops in each community to gain support from local authorities, stakeholders, and parents, and raise awareness about safety concerns and risks the participant could face – especially the girls. An important step in Photovoice is a thorough consent process, done to inform the community, families, and participants about the evaluation's goals, potential outcomes, potential benefits, and risks.

Photovoice data collection and group analysis was designed to be about one week in length (steps 3-7 above). Participants were trained for three and a half days in the mechanics and ethics of digital photography and were provided guidelines for what they should photograph over the next five to seven days. An open prompt enabled participants to spontaneously document what they considered significant within their own lives and their communities, including references to changes in social norms that had shifted in these villages over the course of the project. Over the next two days the Photovoice team followed up with each participant to ensure that there were no difficulties using their cameras. During this time, the team also collected and stored the images that were already taken and provided new memory cards or charged the cameras as needed.

Halfway through the week, each of the girls' groups came together for a focus group discussion that explored the impact of Tipping Point's program. Participants were asked to list the changes experienced as a result of the program, and then were asked to classify and rank the most important ones. Data was collected from the discussions

### Prompt #1

*Think about your life two years ago, and then think about it now. What are some of the changes that have taken place in your life over the past two years? (both good and bad.) I want you to go and photograph some of those changes. Think about changes in you. Then think about relationships with your family members, or your friends. Or they could be changes in your home, in your schools, and in your village.*

### Prompt #2

*What changes would you like to see that have not happened yet?*

and used to provide further context to the photographs. Participants were then given a second prompt: to photograph any changes that they want to see that have not happened yet. This midweek discussion turned out to be essential in shaping the nature of the pictures taken. Initially the photographs were more general and included the environment, flowers, birds and daily lives. After the focused discussion about changes as a result of Tipping Point programming, the pictures became more contemplative of the social norms shifting, changes in girls' lives and perception of girls' rights and gender equality in their communities.

## Analysis

In a final workshop (steps 6-7 above), the participants were directly involved in the initial analysis process. The participants met together to select and share 20 of their most important images and provide some basic information about the photographs (who, what, where, when and “why is this picture important or meaningful to you”). After each participant finished selecting photographs, they gathered in groups and presented the top five images each one selected. Finally, the participants completed the final consent process and were asked if they wanted to share their images and stories with the group and with the researchers. During the discussion, the participants identified key themes or issues that repeatedly came up across individual’s and the group’s descriptions.

The images, captions, audio files and dialogue that emerged from the Photovoice process were transcribed, coded and analyzed for common themes and trends related to the evaluation questions. Researchers identified themes, frequency, intensity and commonalities contained within the participants’ image captions and transcripts from each discussion. When possible, the images were coded by theme as well. Analysis progressed iteratively to form a coding framework.

The participants’ image choices and their corresponding captions and stories helped both participants themselves and researchers understand perceptions of changes experienced in individual lives and their communities. Photovoice was particularly unique by giving participants, especially girls, a voice and the tools to share their lives, experiences and stories of change through pictures. The photographs revealed what the participants viewed as important changes in social norms and illustrated some of the concrete actions they are taking in their homes and communities to advocate for their rights. For example, participants shared [photos](#) of girls playing football and riding bicycles, men and boys sharing more responsibility for household work, and supplies for menstrual hygiene management - all of which had previously been considered taboo. During discussion, some participants commented that Tipping Point directly contributed to the identified changes and described some of the complex set of factors that facilitate change.

### Participatory Analysis for Photovoice

1.

*Participants selected 20 photographs each to be used for analysis, and narrowed those to five of the most important images.*

2.

*Participants contextualized the photograph through stories about what the images represent.*

3.

*Participants identified the issues, themes or theories that emerged.*





## Lessons Learned

**The Photovoice process and access to technology were celebrated** as an exciting opportunity by the community. Participants also gained confidence in managing the camera, both in its functions and also negotiating its use for themselves with family members and friends. Participants were eager to engage in critical reflection to identify what the photographs represented in the larger context of social norms change.

**Photovoice encouraged a sense of ownership and increased agency to each of the participants.** When they were unable to use human subjects, participants found innovative ways to visualize their experiences through objects and places and then connect a picture to real-life stories. This innovation should be considered as a way to encourage participant expression in contexts where photographing human subjects is inappropriate.

The analysis process affirmed the **importance of social norms in supporting positive change and the value of Tipping Point's social norms shifting interventions**, demonstrating that Photovoice can be an effective complementary tool to focus group discussions when measuring social norms change.

## Challenges

The primary challenge in this process was that **many of the participants were located within the same community, and due to the limited timeframe, were faced with challenges of collecting subjects for photographs.** Several participants took photos of the same subjects and the short timeline may have limited the quality of photos and captions that reference social norms change. To overcome this challenge, practitioners may wish to engage participants across different communities and allow for a longer timeframe of introduction of the research (to allow girls to prepare and plan for their photographs) and time for taking photographs.

Despite these challenges, Photovoice has proven to be an invaluable tool for involving the community in evaluation and a source of both community empowerment and rich, nuanced data about change and how change happens.

For more information about Photovoice or the other Tipping Point Phase 1 evaluation [methods](#), please contact Anne Sprinkel, Tipping Point Project Director, at [anne.sprinkel@care.org](mailto:anne.sprinkel@care.org).

## ENDNOTES

1 CARE Tipping Point Photovoice tool: Adapted from Wang, C., & Burris, M. (1997). Photovoice: concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health Education & Behaviour*, 24 (3), 369-387

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