Unit 26

Photography in inventorying

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Lesson plan

Duration:

3 hours

Objectives:

Participants will be able to discuss the photo-voice concept as a tool of community expression, applying the principles of photographic composition. They will also be able to select the best types of shots and distance, choose an appropriate angle and make adjustments for different light conditions.

Description:

This unit explores the ways in which photographs can be employed in community-based inventorying processes. It introduces participants to the photo-voice model as a tool for community expression. It reviews basic techniques, including a discussion of the ideas that pictures can convey when certain variables are altered, such as composition or lighting.

Proposed sequence:

* Photo-voice
* Creating photographs
* Content of photographs
* Types of shots
* Working with light
* Exercise 1: Composition
* Exercise 2: The rule of thirds
* Exercise 3: Experimenting with zoom
* Exercise 4: Working with angles
* Exercise 5: Experimenting with lighting

Supporting documents:

* Unit 26 PowerPoint presentation
* Unit 26 Hand-out 1: Glossary for Unit 26
* Unit 26 Hand-out 2: Working with exposure and focus (optional)

Notes and suggestions

This unit is adapted from CTA. 2010. *Training Kit on Participatory Spatial Information Management and Communication*. CTA, The Netherlands and IFAD, Italy (ISBN: 978-92-9081-446-7)

It includes a number of exercises that might be used relative to the time available.

More advanced participants may take advantage of Unit 26 Hand-out 2 on “Working with exposure and focus”, which can be distributed if appropriate.

Unit 26

Photography in inventorying

Facilitator’s narrative

###### Slide 1.

Photography in inventorying

###### Slide 2.

In this presentation…

Photography can be an effective way of gathering the living and evolving nature of intangible cultural heritage, in particular by depicting processes of enactment and by recording the experiences and explanations of the people concerned. Furthermore, photographs are not mere archival or research materials, they are active tools for giving visibility to living heritage and safeguarding it.

This unit reviews basic techniques of photography, including a discussion of the ideas that a picture can convey when certain variables are altered, such as composition or lighting. The unit includes exercises that allow trainees to practise photography techniques, as well as an introduction to the photo-voice model as a tool for community expression.

###### Slide 3.

Photo-voice

The photo-voice model was first developed within a reproductive health and development programme in China as a participatory approach involving the use of photography to represent community members who may not normally have a voice.

In the case of community-based inventorying, photo-voice enables community members to become photographers, giving them the opportunity to record, reflect upon and evaluate their own ICH elements. Photo-voice entails providing community members with cameras and some basic training on their use, and then allowing them to inventory their own ICH.

Photo-voice provides an interesting approach for inventorying ICH in at least two distinct ways.

* It provides community members with an outlet for creatively collecting ICH elements. This is undertaken in a manner that allows them to make connections with one another and to see the ways in which their photographs can enrich an inventory.
* It builds the capacity of community members by teaching them basic photographic techniques. Skills associated with photo production, working with digital images, and processing and displaying images remain in the community, allowing members to share these abilities with one another.

Using the notion of photo-voice also enables community members to play a leading role in inventorying, and increases the confidence of the photographers with regard to the role they can play in inventorying their ICH. However, using photographic equipment should also be seen as a responsibility and the following issues should be discussed:

* When is it appropriate to take someone’s picture?
* Is it acceptable to take pictures of people without their knowledge?
* What kinds of responsibilities are associated with using a camera?
* What activities would you prefer not to be photographed doing?

The answers to these questions will likely vary in response to the cultural setting in which photo-voice is being used. These kinds of issues should be discussed in a training session with community members, prior to taking any pictures. This training session should also include a discussion of how to use the camera and an introduction to some of the following photographic techniques. These techniques will also be useful for project facilitators interested in taking meaningful photographs.

Note to facilitator:

The facilitator may wish to remind participants of their ethical duties and responsibilities, as well as the importance of free, prior, and informed consent discussed in the previous module.

If participants are interested in learning more about photo-voice and the ways it might apply to inventorying, they might be referred to the following documents:

* Wang, C.C., Cash, J.L. and Powers, L.S. 2000. ‘Who Knows the Streets as Well as the Homeless? Promoting Personal and Community Action Through Photovoice’. *Health Promotion Practice 1.1.*
* Photovoice Hamilton, Manual and Resource Kit. 2007.   
  <http://photovoice.ca/manual.pdf>
* Palibroda, B. with Krieg, B., Murdock, L. and Havelock, J. 2009. *A Practical Guide to Photovoice: Sharing Pictures, Telling Stories and changing communities*. The Prairie Women’s Health Centre of Excellence

###### Slide 4.

Creating photographs: composition

Composition refers to the way in which the subject of the video or photograph is set up in the frame. This involves working with light, camera angle and the camera lens. Understanding the rules of composition is key to taking good photographs and film. The wayin which subject is portrayed in a picture communicates meaning just as much as the content of the photo.

For example, if a subject is photographed or filmed in low light, from a low angle and close-up, they will convey an eerie, powerful, aggressive or mysterious quality. If she or he is shot in sunlight, straight on (i.e. at a height equal with the camera) and from a medium-close distance, they will convey a more inviting and comfortable quality to viewers.

Understanding the basic rules of good composition means placing subjects in certain ways within the frame with the intention and purpose to convey a certain meaning or quality. In what follows, the basic rules of good composition are discussed, as well as how to compose subjects within a frame to communicate accurately to viewers the meaning and feeling in the work.

Note to facilitator:

The difference between a ‘good’ picture and a ‘bad’ one is subjective. Facilitators can emphasize that there is no one right way to take a picture, and participants should experiment with varying approaches to achieve the results they desire.

###### Slide 5.

Creating photographs: the rule of thirds (1)

One of the most well-known and important principles of photographic composition is the ‘rule of thirds’. This rule helps to create well-balanced and interesting shots.

The basic principle behind the rule of thirds is to imagine dividing an image into thirds, both horizontally and vertically, so that the image is made up of nine squares. The photographer then transposes this grid on the image when looking through the viewfinder or at the LCD display used to frame the shot. The grid helps to identify points of interest in the image and to place them in a part of the frame that will attract the eye. The four lines (two vertical and two horizontal) in the grid help to position the elements of the photograph.

###### Slide 6.

Creating photographs: the rule of thirds (2)

If the points of interest of the image are placed in the intersections or along the lines of this imaginary grid, the photo becomes more balanced and the viewer is able to interact with it more naturally. Studies have shown that when people view an image, their eyes tend to focus on these intersection points rather than on the centre of the shot.

It is not necessarily true that if these rules are broken the picture will be uninteresting. However, in order to understand how to break the rules and still take good shots, it is important to learn them first.

###### Slide 7.

Creating photographs: the rule of thirds (3)

A good technique for landscape shots is to position horizons along one of the horizontal lines, rather than in the centre of the square.

A good technique for taking photographs with people is to place their eyes on an intersection point and their bodies along one of the two vertical lines.

Two questions photographers should always ask themselves are:

* What are the points of interest in this shot?
* Where should they be intentionally placed?

###### Slide 8.

Content

Determining good composition is subjective: a photographer may feel that a particular composition suits a subject. However, there are some aspects of composition that are subject to convention. These include ensuring that the subjects are:

* facing the camera,
* filling the picture (i.e. objects are not too far away), and
* framed within the picture.

The location of subjects within the frame places a different emphasis on individuals. It is the composition of the shot that can convey a feeling about the events that are taking place.

###### Slide 9.

Content: headroom

Headroom refers to the space between the top of someone’s head and the top of the frame. If there is too much headroom, the shot looks awkward (see the images). In a shot of a person’s upper body and head, it is usually better if the person’s head is nearer the top rather than the bottom of the frame (i.e. so that the viewer can see a part of the shoulders). If the head is at the bottom of the frame, it looks as if it does not have a body attached.

There are occasions when the photographer might place the head at the bottom of the frame, for example, if he or she wanted to capture something important behind the subject.

###### Slide 10.

Content: nose room

Nose room refers to the distance between the nose of the subject and the edge of the frame. This principle is usually only relevant when taking a close-up, profile shot of a subject. Typically the space in the direction that the nose is pointing should be greater than the space behind the head.

In other words, if the subject is facing to the right they should be positioned in the left part of the frame. If they are facing to the left, they should be positioned on the right side of the frame.

If the subject has sufficient nose room in a picture, it conveys the impression that the subject’s gaze is filling the frame and that the subject is aware of what is in front of them. When the principles of nose room are not applied, details in the background of the photograph or video may distract the audience.

In the shot of the girl, the picture looks as if it were taken spontaneously. The viewer cannot quite tell if she is halfway through a head turn or gazing intently at something. If there were more nose room in the picture, the picture would convey a clearer idea.

###### Slide 11.

Types of shots: range

Understanding the type of shot involves recognizing the distance used to photograph the subject and the effect this distance has on the viewer’s interpretation of the photograph. The following section discusses a number of different ranges.

###### Slide 12.

Types of shots: extreme close-up

**Extreme close-up**: This refers to an object photographed close-up, such as a single flower or someone’s eyes or nose; it is not used too often. Care is needed when using this shot as it can make the object seem unnatural to the point where it might become unrecognizable. However, it can also allow viewers to become intimate with a subject, almost to a point not possible in everyday life.

It is best not to use the zoom to get this effect, as the camera will not pick up the high quality of detail or depth of image obtained by placing the camera right up against the subject.

###### Slide 13.

Types of shots: close-up

**Close-up:** This shot is often used to obtain a close-up of a full face, and can help to make characters recognizable to the audience. One problem with shooting close-up and extreme close-up shots is that the subjects can easily move out of the frame. It is not advisable to keep moving the camera to keep the subject in the centre of the frame.

###### Slide 14.

Types of shots: medium close-up

**Medium close-up:** The medium close-up is a very common shot – often a head and shoulders shot. Unlike the close-up, it leaves some headroom above the subject and typically cuts the subject off in the middle of the chest. This shot can be used if the photographer wants a picture or video of an individual among people sitting on the ground or a chair.

###### Slide 15.

Types of shots: medium shot

**Medium shot**: The medium shot shows most of the body, generally cutting off between the waist and knee. It is a good shot for individuals as the body fills the frame and it is difficult to see the background.

###### Slide 16.

Types of shots: long shot

**Long shot**: The long shot is commonly used when there is more than one subject, for example, during a meeting when more than one person is the focus of attention.

###### Slide 17.

Types of shots: extreme long shot

**Extreme long shot**: The extreme long shot is used mainly for panoramas. Distinguishing features, such as facial details, are minimal. It is usually used to convey a sense of an environment or the subject’s relation to their environment.

###### Slide 18.

Types of shots: angle

When taking a photograph or video footage, different camera angles convey different feelings or meanings to the viewer.

* **High-angle shots**: In high shots the camera is positioned above, looking down on the subject. This type of shot can insinuate that the subject is in some way inferior and small, or may convey the feeling that the viewer is removed from the subject.
* **Low-angle shots:** Low shots are when the camera is positioned below, looking up at the subject. It is sometimes used to confer respect on a subject or to accentuate their magnitude and grandeur.
* **Eye-level shots:** In eye-level shots the camera is positioned level with the subject**.** Eye-level shots are used to imply equanimity.

###### Slide 19.

Working with lighting: low lighting

It might sometimes seem to the naked eye that there is sufficient light because the eye has become accustomed to a low level of light (e.g. when it slowly gets dark at night); however, in reality there is not enough light for the camera or video camera to operate effectively.

Photographers need to be careful when there is very little light, such as at night or in a dark house or room. During these times, the camera will use its flash. However, using a flash can create glare. To take a picture in low light, put the camera on a tripod, keep it absolutely still, decrease the shutter speed and aperture and increase the ISO settings.

###### Slide 20.

Working with lighting: bright light

Facilitators may wish to explain to participants that the quality of light will vary substantially depending on the time of day and the weather (when taking photos outdoors).

If the light is bright (e.g. if the photograph is taken outside in the sun in the middle of the day), everything in the photo might appear washed out. Photographers also need to be careful of shadows on bright days outside, especially during the middle part of the day when the sun is directly overhead in the sky. In a brightly lit situation, increase the shutter speed and aperture and decrease the ISO settings. These tips help photographers to adjust for light. However, photographers should be encouraged to play around with different combinations of settings to learn how they affect the final image.

*Source****:*** Corbett J. and White K. 2010. *Handout for Trainee*. Unit M14U05, Module M14: Documentation; in “Training Kit on Participatory Spatial Information Management and Communication”, CTA, The Netherlands and IFAD, Italy

Unit 26

Exercise 1: Composition

#### Objective:

To practice composing photographs using several different conventions.

#### Time:

45 minutes

#### Materials:

A digital camera.

#### Procedure:

* Pair up the participants and invite them to practise taking photos of each other, ensuring that their partners are:
* facing the camera,
* filling the picture, and
* framed within the picture.
* Instruct participants to practise taking photos with different amounts of headroom. Notice the difference between shots with more and less headroom.
* Invite participants to practise taking photos with different amounts of nose room. Notice the difference between shots with more and less nose room.
* After they have taken several photos, instruct them to rejoin the group and evaluate what they like best about the pictures taken by themselves and the other participants.
* Invite participants to practise experimenting with composition for a second time, bearing in mind the aspects that they liked best about the photos they evaluated and employing those strategies.

#### Tips and options:

Remember, good composition is subjective (i.e. an appreciation of what constitutes ‘good’ composition varies among individuals). The most important thing is that participants are happy with the appearance of their pictures.

*Source****:*** Corbett J. and White K. 2010. *Exercise No. 1: Composition*. Unit M14U05, Module M14: Documentation; in “Training Kit on Participatory Spatial Information Management and Communication”, CTA, The Netherlands and IFAD, Italy.

Unit 26

Exercise 2: THE Rule of thirds

#### Objective:

To employ the rule of thirds when taking a photograph with a digital camera.

#### Time:

45 minutes

#### Materials:

One digital camera per group.

#### Procedure:

**[[1]](#footnote-1)**

* Instruct the participants to look through the viewfinder or at the display of their cameras and to imagine the image divided into nine equally sized squares, as in the figure above. Ask them to line up different shots, paying attention to which features would be situated along the lines and which would appear at the intersections of those lines.
* Participants should begin first with a landscape shot. Ask them to practise situating the horizon along one of the horizontal lines.
* Divide participants into pairs and instruct them to practise taking pictures of one other. Participants should practise lining their partners’ eyes up with the points where two lines intersect and their bodies with one of the vertical lines. Ask them to try taking photos of groups of people.
* After they have taken several photos, instruct them to rejoin the group and evaluate what they like best about the pictures taken by themselves and the other participants.
* Invite participants to practice using the rule of thirds for a second time, keeping in mind the aspects they liked best about the photos they evaluated and employing those strategies.

*Source****:*** Corbett J. and White K., 2010. *Exercise No. 4: The Rule of Thirds.* Unit M14U05, Module M14: Documentation; in “Training Kit on Participatory Spatial Information Management and Communication”. CTA, The Netherlands and IFAD, Italy.

Unit 26

Exercise 3: Experimenting with zoom

#### Objective:

To become familiar with the zoom capabilities on a digital camera and to determine when to zoom in or out.

#### Time:

45 minutes

#### Materials:

One digital camera per participant.

#### Procedure:

* Divide the participants into pairs. Instruct them to locate the zoom feature on their cameras. This will likely be either a wheel or two buttons with the ‘ +’ and ‘ –’ or ‘ W’ and ‘T’ signs.
* Invite participants to practise looking through the viewfinders, or the digital displays on the back of the their cameras, and zooming in and out of various features.
* Invite participants to compare zooming in on a feature and physically walking closer to it (when possible).
* Remind the participants about the tips concerning composition. Using the zoom properly can help fill the frame in a way that is visually pleasing or conveys a particular message.
* Invite participants to work with a partner and practise taking a portrait shot using a camera’s zoom. Participants should notice that they are able to blur the background of a shot and place more emphasis on the portrait’s subject by stepping back and zooming in on the subject’s face.
* Tell participants to use their cameras’ zoom and also to move closer or farther away from the subjects of the photos to take at least one photo from each of the following distances:
* extreme close-up,
* close-up,
* medium close-up,
* medium shot,
* long shot, and
* extreme long shot.
* For extreme close-ups, participants may wish to use their cameras’ macro settings. Invite the participants to locate this function on their cameras and practise taking extreme close-up shots.
* After they have taken several photos, invite the participants to rejoin the group and evaluate what they like best about the pictures taken by themselves and the other participants.
* Invite participants to practise using the zoom function for a second time, bearing in mind the aspects they liked best about the photos they evaluated as a group.

*Source****:*** Corbett J. and White K., 2010. *Exercise No. 3: Experimenting with Zoom*. Unit M14U05 Module M14:Documentation; in “Training Kit on Participatory Spatial Information Management and Communication”. CTA, The Netherlands and IFAD, Italy.

Unit 26

Exercise 4: Working with angles

#### Objective:

To practice taking photographs using different camera angles.

#### Time:

45 minutes

#### Materials:

A digital camera per pair of participants.

#### Procedure:

* Invite participants to pair up and practise taking high-angle shots. Participants should position themselves physically higher than their partners and take a photograph looking down on them. This might be done by standing at the top of a flight of stairs or sitting on a desk while their partners sit on the floor.
* Next, invite participants to practise taking a low-angle shot. In this case the photographer will be positioned looking up at their partner.
* Finally, ask the participants to practise taking eye-level shots with their partners.
* After they have taken several photos, ask the participants to rejoin the group and evaluate what they like best about the pictures taken by themselves and the other participants.
* Invite them to practise working with different angles for a second time, bearing in mind the aspects they liked best about the photos they evaluated and employing those strategies.

*Source****:*** Corbett J. and White K., 2010. *Exercise No. 5: Working with Angles*. Unit M14U05, Module M14: Doucmentation; in “Training Kit on Participatory Spatial Information Management and Communication”. CTA, The Netherlands and IFAD, Italy.

Unit 26

Exercise 5: Experimenting with lighting

#### Objective:

To operate the camera under different levels of lighting.

#### Time:

45 minutes

#### Materials:

One digital camera per participant.

#### Procedure:

* For this exercise, participants should practise taking photos in a number of different locations in order to evaluate the effect that lighting has on the photographs.
* Starting indoors, invite the participants to take a picture:
* in the darkest section of the room,
* facing away from a window, and
* facing a window.
* Ask them to experiment with the camera’s flash while taking photos indoors. They may wish to work with a partner, having them stand in different areas of the room in order to compare the images captured. Always keep in mind the tips about composition.
* Next, ask the participants to move outdoors. The quality of photos taken outside varies considerably and is dependent on weather conditions (in particular, cloud cover). For example, the kinds of photos captured on a bright sunny day will differ greatly from those produced on a cloudy, rainy afternoon.
* Regardless of the weather conditions, invite the participants to practise taking photos in different locations outdoors.
* Instruct them to take a picture directly facing the brightest direction in the sky.
* Ask them to find a shady area and take a picture.
* Invite them to pair up and experiment with the different ways in which light affects the shadows present on their faces.
* In the longer term, they might also want to take photographs at different times of the day. The position of the sun in the sky changes throughout the day and will affect how shadows fall and the brightness of light on a subject.
* Invite participants to rejoin the group and evaluate what they like best about the pictures taken by themselves and the other participants.
* Instruct the trainees to practise experimenting with lighting for a second time, bearing in mind the aspects they liked best about the photos that they evaluated and employing those strategies.

*Source****:*** Corbett J. and White K., 2010. *Exercise No: 2: Experimenting with Lighting*. Unit M14U05, Module M14: Documentation; in “Training Kit on Participatory Spatial Information Management and Communication”. CTA, The Netherlands and IFAD, Italy.

1. . http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/1/1b/Rule\_of\_thirds.jpg/800px-Rule\_of\_thirds.jpg [↑](#footnote-ref-1)