



# Documenting Wellbeing Among University of Zambia Students Through Photovoice



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## Location: Lusaka, Zambia

Zambia is a landlocked country, located in central south Africa and has a population of over 16 million people. Lusaka is the capital city and English is the official language of the country. Zambia is one of the world's leading exporters of copper. The country is also home to Victoria Falls, one of the 7 Natural Wonders of the World.

## Choice

There is an overwhelming focus in the literature on examining Zambian youth wellbeing in the context of sexual health behaviors and HIV/AIDs. This literature is indicative of common issues that Zambian youth face amidst the HIV/AIDs epidemic in the country, however it may overlook how Zambian youth fair holistically.

The under emphasis of wellbeing in the literature calls for an examination of how Zambian youth currently perceive and practice wellbeing. Photovoice is a research method which engages youth to be participants in documenting their own stories.



## Project Information

My global independent study was with first year students at the University of Zambia (UNZA), in the Social Work Department. The project consisted of:  
•5 photovoice sessions in which students discussed, took photographs, and captioned things that are important to their individual wellbeing and the wellbeing of their community.  
•Pre and post test surveys to better understand students' knowledge and experiences of wellbeing and the impact of participating in a photovoice project.

## Global Field Agency

The University of Zambia (UNZA), Social Work Department is located in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, one of the ten schools of the University. UNZA is located in Lusaka, Zambia and is the oldest public institution of higher education learning in Zambia. The school was founded in 1965 and its mission is "to provide relevant higher education through teaching, research and community service".

## Outcomes

- Gathered preliminary data on ways in which students define, perceive, and practice wellbeing in Zambia
  - The students identified key components to their wellbeing that included cultural, political, spiritual and environmental factors.
  - The majority (67%) of students reported that they are dissatisfied or unsure of their personal wellbeing.
  - Most students (92%) responded that they are not satisfied with the wellbeing of their community.
  - Most students (92%) also responded that they believe that everyone should find time to contribute to the wellbeing of their community.
- The students came up with 7 different initiatives to improve the wellbeing of their community, as a part of their photovoice 'action steps.'

## Skills Utilized

- Adapted and edited the photovoice curriculum.
- Completed a local and International Institutional Review Board (IRB) process.
- Conducted a thematic analysis for the pre-post survey data.

## Classroom Connections

•SW 696 Social Work Practice with Children and Youth  
This course provided me with person centered language, an understanding of cross cultural factors, protective and promotive factors to child and youth wellbeing. As a result, I tailored sessions to account for individual differences and community needs, with room for feedback.

•SW CE Mixed Methods Certificate Program  
This course introduced me to key terminology and designs within mixed methods research. From this course I am prepared to plan a longitudinal study, beginning with the qualitative photovoice process and quantitative survey data as preliminary data.

## Lessons Learned

- It is important to engage a local partner in planning a project and completing the IRB process, in order to have a culturally relevant project which follows local rules and regulations.
- Overestimate the amount of time that it will take to collaborate with international partners- their schedules and timelines may be different than my own.



## Career Connections

In my doctoral program I am studying factors that contribute to youth wellbeing. This project in Zambia gave me the opportunity to fulfill my desire to study youth wellbeing in an international context. I will continue working with UNZA students to create a survey instrument relevant to the wellbeing of Zambian youth. Preliminary data from this global independent study will influence the creation of this survey.

## Advice

- Consider talking to someone who has similar interests or who has done a similar project as you.
- Look at the literature. Current literature on wellbeing and photovoice helped me structure my own project.
- Be flexible. Understand that your timeline may not work for your community project or agency.
- Consider conferences, journals or other platforms where you might share your work, throughout the process.

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