



Seeing Through Their Eyes: Photovoice as a Community Capacity-Strengthening Tool for Identifying and Documenting Climate-Health Impacts in Mt Darwin and Harare, Zimbabwe

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Background and objective



Climate change threatens marginalized communities, but top-down approaches often miss lived realities, priorities and context-specific impacts.

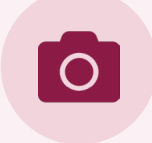


REACT used Photovoice in urban Harare and rural Mt Darwin to understand how residents experience climate-related risks and their effects on health.



Objective: To engage community members as active knowledge generators and inform climate change mitigation and adaptation priorities.

Methods and analysis



Photovoice was used in Harare and Mt Darwin during REACT formative community engagement.



Participants: adult women and men (18+), including community members and active community health workers (CHWs). Total number and gender breakdown not reported.



Mt Darwin sampling: purposive recruitment across ten primary-level clinic catchment areas in Upper Mt Darwin and the Lower Valley. Harare sampling details not reported.



Eligibility: community members resident for ≥ 1 year and willing to engage in critical visual inquiry; CHWs actively engaged in community health initiatives.



Participants received a one-day training on photography and research ethics. They photographed local risks and explained their images through facilitated one-on-one discussions.



Four discussion themes: climate crises, causes and changing weather; health impacts and vulnerable groups; barriers to healthcare; and coping or community responses.



Images and accounts informed co-creation and priority setting for REACT interventions in both sites.

Results



Mt Darwin – DEFORESTATION

High deforestation resulted in heavy winds due to destroyed natural windbreaks. The trees were used for tobacco curing



MT DARWIN · STORM DAMAGE

Destroyed mothers' waiting shelter illustrates damage to maternal health infrastructure, increasing health risk for pregnant mothers coming from distance places.



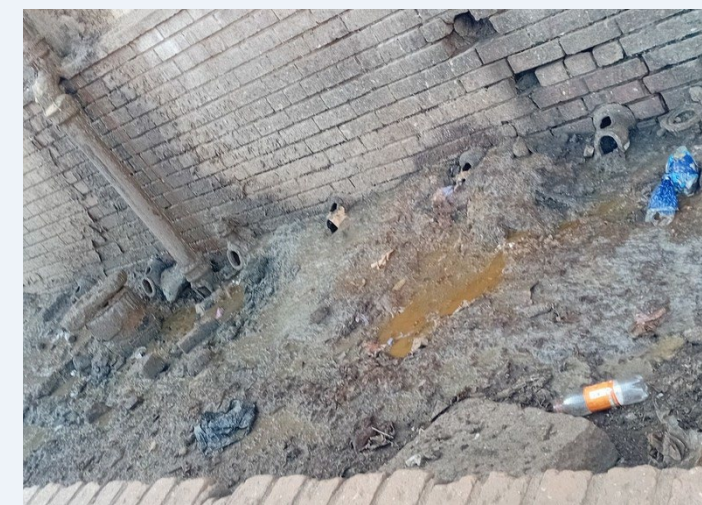
MT DARWIN · FLOODED ROADS

Flooded roads affect pregnant women and other vulnerable groups in accessing health facilities, also affected community outreach leading to poor health outcomes



HARARE · LITTERING

Accumulated solid waste adds to environmental and drainage concerns, posing a risk of urban flash flooding.



HARARE · SEWAGE

Exposed wastewater illustrates sub-optimal sanitation and a high risk of cholera and typhoid.



MT DARWIN · DROUGHT AND ERRATIC RAINFALL

Poor rainfall affected household food security which led to malnutrition amongst community members. The community is now resorting to Sorghum to counter drought impacts

WATER AT BOTH SITES

Participants identified unreliable water supply and shortages; drought and competition for water were raised in Mt Darwin.

HARARE: URBAN ENVIRONMENT

Littering, sewage and flash flooding were prominent concerns, linking drainage and sanitation to health and mobility.

MT DARWIN: ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

Deforestation, drought and damage from storms were raised alongside water insecurity and disrupted access.

GENDERED IMPACTS

Water collection and household care can increase women's time burdens. Flooded roads and damaged maternity infrastructure create particular access concerns for pregnant women.

COMMUNITY VOICE AND RESPONSES

Participants used photographs and narratives to identify hazards, barriers to care and local coping responses, contributing priorities for subsequent co-creation.

Discussion



Participants selected and interpreted images themselves, foregrounding conditions that standard interviews may overlook.



The images connect hazards with daily tasks: obtaining water, navigating damaged roads and protecting household health.



Beyond evidence generation, it built community confidence, reflection, and commitment to advocate for climate-resilient health services.



Photovoice supported collective reflection and identification of locally relevant priorities; impacts on empowerment were not quantified.

References and disclosures



REACT Consortium. Participatory Photovoice work in Harare and Mt Darwin, Zimbabwe. CeSHHAR Zimbabwe. Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine.

No competing interests declared.



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Conclusions



Participants helped define which climate-health problems deserved attention.



Images linked hazards with work, care responsibilities and access to health services.



Their accounts informed priorities for community-led responses and co-creation.



Key message: Across Harare and Mt Darwin, community photographs connected water insecurity, flooding, sanitation, land-use change and damaged infrastructure with unequal daily burdens and barriers to healthcare.