Photography Abroad

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Einstein Photography
would you still want to travel to that country if you could not take a camera with you.

--- a question of appropriation

Nayyirah Waheed, salt.
Our photographic ethics should extend from our ethics abroad in general, those of social justice, respect, and equity.

To be responsible photographers, we need to reflect on our own privilege, position, and power; we must consider how our presence affects the communities we are in.
How does the following photo make you feel?
Photography has narrative power – at its worst, it can be dehumanizing and evoke negative stereotypes.

It can provoke pity. It can make people seem helpless, “backward,” and Other. This is deeply problematic.
So, how can we do better?

How does the following photo make you feel? How is it different from the previous photo?
This is Lillian, one of the beneficiaries of GlobeMed’s goat-raising project in Gulu, Uganda. We spent the afternoon hanging out in her compound, laughing about her favorite goat.
Photography is a wonderful tool. It shrinks the world and elucidates the human experience. How you portray people and places abroad matters.

Storytelling can be a form of activism if we challenge oppressive narratives. We can do so by creating photographs that just treat people as people.

Help people tell the stories they want to tell.
Tips from the Field

1) Before you go:

- Make a game plan with your team. What kinds of stories will you want to tell with potential photographs that you take?
- Reflect on what your expectations for travel are. What will you find? Who will you find? What are your motives?
2) During your trip:

- Get to know your subject. Build trust before the photo is taken.
- Ask for permission! Please don’t stick your camera in someone’s face. Asking helps you stay culturally and personally sensitive and relevant.
- Think about what you’re choosing to include or not include in the photo, and for what purpose.
- Show your subject the photo!
3) After your trip

• Use informative captions on social media
  • Include your subject’s name in the caption

• Send the photo to your subject so they can also cherish the memory/moment/their experience.

• Be conscious of how you use your photos and the story they’re telling. If your NGO/program wants to use one of your photograph for a website or blog, ask them why they want to use it and how it will be displayed.

• Be honest with your storytelling.
Bottom line: humility.
Sources:

- Unite for Sight, “Ethics and Photography in Developing Countries.” Website.

Suggested:

- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, “The Danger of a Single Story” TED talk.
- Susan Sontag, Regarding the Pain of Others.