

Engage, advocate, inspire and empower - Using photography as a driver of sustainability

By [Aida Muluneh](#)

26 Jan 2022

Photography is not just a tool for artistic expression or documentation, it is a lot more than that. Let's answer the million-dollar question - Why is photography important? Because it speaks, it communicates, it educates and it cultivates change.



Source: [Pexels](#)

I am often asked this question and my answer remains the same always. Photography is not just a tool for artistic expression or documentation, it is a lot more than that.

Photography has the power to raise awareness, to change the narrative thus inspiring people to take action, for instance my work around 'Water Life' from 2018 addressed the plight of water access and its impact not only on the society but also on women in rural regions, especially so in Ethiopia but also across Africa. In reality, it is a tool to spread education not only inside our own regions and countries but also beyond our borders to be able to draw attention, start a conversation and bring people together.

So for me, photography does not really fit in any one description box, but rather it molds into something that you want to project out to the world. Similar to the art of Cinema, photography can be used to entertain, educate, ask questions, and throw light on our history or all of the above. It is really what you make out of it and that's why it is vital for our society, educational institutions and governments today to encourage and empower photographers and to truly appreciate the art of photography.

Power of the image - Forming perceptions, driving change

As the founder and director of the Addis Foto Fest (AFF), the first international photography festival in East Africa hosted since 2010 in the city of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, I can vouch for the fact that photography has the potential to become a force that drives change.

Of course, great power comes with a great responsibility and that is exactly what budding photographers today need to be made aware of. Competitions such as 'Moments that Matter' reflect light on the pressing issues that we as a species and as a planet are facing together and these grave issues need to be conveyed to as many people as possible without making them despondent.

That's where the theme of sustainability fits in so well to showcase this ever-going cycle of today and tomorrow and its direct co-relation with each other. Everything that we do today shapes our future for tomorrow, this is the encapsulating theme that photographers need to bear in mind.

We live in this day and age of rapid consumption and according to Statista's 2021 [report](#) on 'Mobile Usage', there are currently 6.4 billion smartphone users worldwide. As unbelievable as this figure is, one can only imagine the number of images consumed by each of these people, and images have the inherent ability to form perceptions and perspectives.



Coca-Cola launches its new sustainability platform in Africa

17 Jan 2022



Hence, it is even more vital today to use this technology of smartphones and social media to direct messages of progress towards people to drive that sentiment that leads them to take action and make meaningful changes. Canon's initiative on empowering photographers to capture moments in the sustainability spectrum through categories that speak about economic, human, environmental and social progress is truly the pressing priority for all of us.

However, the beauty of the competition lies in the spirit of sustainability that rekindles the flame of hope in our hearts and gives us a reason to look forward to the future. It is this challenge that participating photographers need to understand and convey in their images, to show us the problem but also to shed light on its solutions.

As a practicing advocate of change through photography, I am extremely keen to see the submissions that come through allowing us to look at the world through someone else's eye, to experience their vision and see what change others are aspiring to create not only in their own country but for the whole wide world.

Take for instance, my very own continent of Africa where more often than not, portrayal of poverty or other issues is depicted through photography which often lacks the balanced perspective in which also it is an indigenous view and not only through the foreign gaze or visual arts.

But today, this narrative is changing as we see a new generation of photographers who overcome great challenges to be the visual storytellers of a changing Africa in which they offer a new perspective that offers our humanity and humility. This is the power of an image and through this medium to show the world the enormous amount of talent, culture, capabilities as well as the scope for a better future and this other side of Africa that is often hidden or lost in pictures.



Infobip launches ESG arm for a sustainable future in tech

14 Jan 2022



Photography as a means of advocacy - Help to heal

In a world as diverse and complex as ours, there are various issues that need to be brought to the surface to evoke a conversation leading us to solutions. This responsibility needs to be collectively shared not just by creative industries but all industries out there, even those that are impacting the narrative of our communities, nations and continents.

Even in the global discourse as it relates to our environment and planet, the power of the image and our connections through technologies offer us many opportunities for change. One person may be able to plant a tree but together we can plant an entire forest and that is the power of helping and empowerment... In helping others we also help and heal ourselves.

This is the main reason why my work outside of being in museums or fine art has been a reflection of advocacy - Advocating the need to make a change. As globalisation has taken center-stage in the last few decades, we must realise this responsibility that we all now share - to really empower each other as people and then to empower our planet to prosper. Finding solutions together is key to unlocking the potential for tomorrow.

Photography is an excellent instrument to advocate the cause that you believe in, for me personally I have been passionate about environmental issues which is depicted through my images. Photographers participating in 'Moments that Matter' must look at engaging their art-forms to advocate and inspire others thus leveraging their visual language to become the hope for tomorrow.



South African student makes Sony World Photography Awards shortlist

20 Jan 2022



No pain, no gain - Pursue your passion to find greatness

Creativity is the birth of innovation and as daunting as it may seem to showcase a new angle or perspective through your images - that is where the true challenge of this visual art-form lies.

Authenticity is the key that unlocks the great power of photography. Photographers that understand this as the basic foundation of their work usually go a long way in their professional paths. In the beginning however, it may seem like an impossible feat to achieve but it is the part of our journey that we need to embrace in order to become visible in this competitive and challenging creative world.

In the past, I have been through phases of disappointment as a young photographer when I struggled to prove my point to people but perseverance, patience and practice can take you anywhere as I have learned from my journey. I was inspired by photographer Chester Higgins who taught me the tricks of the trade - to never stop believing in yourself, your work and to always remain authentic.

That advice has led me to become who I am today. I stuck to black and white photography as my core niche even though the world was booming with innovations in colored photography. It is crucial to reflect your own individual point of view in your work without getting overwhelmed by trends or fads. That remains my advice for all budding photographers who dream to make their mark in the world - be authentic, remain consistent and believe in yourself.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>