**Guideline for sanitation memory holders interviews**

**June 2021, updated October 2021 – OVERDUE WP1[[1]](#footnote-1)**

As part of Work Package 1, we are documenting the **spatial and temporal trajectories** of sanitation across the cities of Beira, Freetown and Mwanza.

Information about infrastructure, promises, and configurations of actors who make and maintain sanitation across the cities has been collected and placed along **timelines**.

Though many things are well documented, **gaps** remain, and some **hypotheses** need to be tested and explored further through interviews with what we call “**memory holders**”.

**Objectives**

The objectives of interviews with memory holders are:

* to question things puzzling us and observations through the light and perspective of women and men who know about the history of the city/neighbourhood, and might have contributed, witnessed, opposed, championed, or studied, sanitation in each city, at various levels (could be around a specific infrastructure, a project, or at municipal level)
* to enrich and validate the timelines, by confirming key elements that are represented and adding the ones suggested by the memory holders.
* To reframe our understanding of sanitation and sanitation justice: by interviewing different memory holders from each city we can rethink sanitation from their perspective and understand what is considered just or unjust at different moments and for different persons.

**Who are “Memory holders”?**

“Memory holder” is not an official title or a specific qualification.

Anyone who feels like she or he can talk about the history of a given sanitation infrastructure, service, project, provision, event or struggle can be considered a “memory holder”.

We will use the timelines to identify potential memory holders that could be related to particular events or even gaps in the timelines. For example, a leader of a women’s movement that led a campaign against cholera in the 1960s or a local engineering consultant who worked on a pit latrine project in the 1970s and then was involved in a similar project in the 1990s.

However, “memory holders” are likely to share some of the following attributes:

* Be long term residents (tenants or landlords) of a city or of a neighbourhood who have witnessed a succession of events, generations, policies, and projects. They could be local chiefs, secretaries, familial authorities, who enjoy sharing the history of the city/neighbourhood.
* Have worked (or working) as a sanitation provider or in a sanitation providing institution for a long time. They could be retired engineers, chairwomen or secretaries of a sanitation service, company or association. This position will have placed these women and men in close contact to infrastructural, technical, political and economic choices that shaped sanitation.
* Long-time tenants, who might have lived in several parts of the city and know differences across neighbourhoods and how sanitation is dealt with by tenants, landlords and municipal authorities. They are likely to know a lot about the changing investments, costs, and constraints on sanitation infrastructure and access.
* Authoritative figures in settlements and neighbourhoods, who have responsibility for local coordination and collective issues. They are likely to have witnessed conflicts around toilets, municipal interventions, as well as multiple collective and individual projects over the years.
* Collectives who have mobilized or are mobilizing for sanitation improvement: Associations of women who fought to improve access to public toilets, or to obtain additional drains in their neighbourhoods or workplace hold part of the history of sanitation.
* Have worked (or working) in planning and construction: persons who are responsible for urban planning, city expansion, the rehabilitation of neighbourhoods, the construction of new housing might know about the choices, legal and technical constraints that influence sanitation choices and infrastructure

**Beware of gender biases!!!! :**

There is a **long-term tendency** of focussing only on **male** “memory holders” because of the roles they occupy in sanitation (pit emptiers, builders, chiefs, engineers).

But **women** hold an **important part of the story and are “memory holders**” too.

When identifying a male “memory holder” ask yourself:

* “What were women doing at the same time?”
* “Which women could tell me her perspective on the story that this men is telling me?”

(And the other way around when interviewing women, investigate which men could tell his story of the same events)

Maintaining a good balance of people on the list of people to be interviewed will be a useful starting point here.

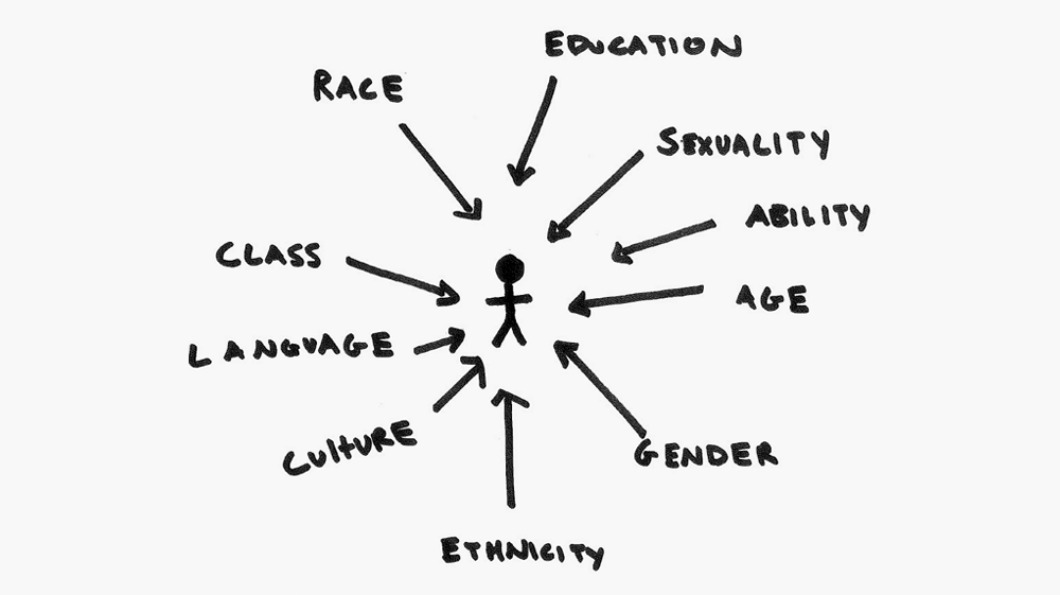
This is **crucial** to ensure an **inclusive** **perspective**

on sanitation trajectories and justice!

**How to identify “memory holders”?**

A productive way is to **start** from the **maps** and **documents** collected, as well as the **sanitation infrastructure** and **services** identified.

* For each one, who could give more historical background?
* Who could explain how were things at the time of the document/map/project/infrastructure?
* Who contributed to setting up these toilets, drains, sewers, or waste water treatment plan?
* **Also start from the gaps:** If a part of the city is not served and disconnected, you could ask tenants and landlords how they manage sanitation? Have they ever tried to connect? Who has come forward to support sanitation in their area?
* **Think inclusive:** Who might have a different or complementary perspective? Thinking in terms of **identities** (how people identify themselves as belonging to different groups) and **intersections** can be a useful way to increase inclusivity.



**Qualitative interview grid**

Interviews with memory holders are

* **qualitative** : in a conversation format, we seek their perspective, experience and knowledge rather than closed answers to a pre-designed form) and
* **open ended** : interviewees will drive the discussion in the direction that interests them and where they have the most things to say, and the objective is more to make sure that what they say is fully understood (so ask for details or further information when not clear or missing) then to cover pre-identified forms.

This being said, here are some tips and suggestions to conduct these interviews. Below are 3 directions that should be explored through interviews:

1. **Make sure you understand who the memory holder is**

**There is not a single (hi)story, there are many stories.**

Women and men, tenants and landlords, chiefs, and engineers will not tell the same story, but all their perspectives matter. Each one knows unique information and has a particular experience due to their position. And all might be blind to some perspectives.

It is thus essential to understand who the storyteller is. How was the person involved with sanitation? From what date to what date? How did they end up being concerned by sanitation? What did they do afterwards?

To **understand** who the **storyteller** is, you can **at any moment** during the interview **seek** **clarification** about their life, their position, their personal experience.

Below is a list of questions. The list is designed to try and identify all the potential issues that it would be useful to talk about with the memory holders. What will probably happen, in practice, is that the participant will talk about issues in anticipation of a question on our list. That is to be expected. In such cases, we can use the list to mentally check off that that issue has been covered or to follow up in more detail.

**Potential list of questions** (to be adapted to each interviewee)

The starting point is to have identified a series of puzzles or patterns in the timelines and maps (THE QUESTION/TOPIC) that we can put to the specific memory holder. Examples of a puzzle might be: why did a latrine project stop when it was supposed to carry on for 10 years? Or: why did the Women’s Movement pick up a Menstrual Hygiene campaign in the 1980s?

* **Start with an open question:** (if a sanitation related person) When did you start working on sanitation? (if a long term resident) Could you share with me the history of the neighbourhood at this period of time? What was sanitation like at the time?
* **Important questions we want to answer for WP1:** 
  + What were the past sanitation promises in this area of the city? (promises of infrastructure, of improved sanitation, or absence of promises)
  + What was the problem/issue/deficit identified at the time that these projects want to change?
  + How did the intervention/project/event reconfigured/transformed sanitation in the city/in the area
* **Follow up questions:** 
  + In what way did you engage/encounter with THE QUESTION/TOPIC of interest [the one identified in the WP1 data collection and why you selected that memory holder]? - At this point, we would like to try and avoid the term ‘sanitation’ even though the term will have been mentioned in the Consent Form and Participant Information Sheet. The reason for trying to avoid it is to try and create space for the participant to talk about the issues in their own words. That is, we know that when we use the term ‘sanitation’ we all probably immediately have certain images relating to health, infrastructure, and toilets in our minds and we know what the accepted ways of talking about these are. By avoiding the term, at least initially, we hope to allow people to talk about the issues in different ways.
  + What was your role in THIS TOPIC? What were your responsibilities?
  + When did you perform this role?
  + How did you come to be in this role? (Was this related to your social position? Gender? Political affiliation? Religion? Age? Or Why were you chosen?)
  + What resources did you have to work with? Did you have budgets? An existing organisation? Political linkages? Etc.?
  + Which p**roblem/s were you facing at this time**? (This relates to their understanding of their capacity to address issues? Perhaps broader than just ‘sanitation’ problems.)
  + Where there specific **taboos/preconceptions/cultural practices** regarding sanitation/toilets/excrements that were making your work easier or more complicated?
    - If so, could you explain?
    - Who was producing the taboos? Or practicing them?
    - Where there people benfiting or loosing from these taboos? Who and Why?
  + What was your strategy? How did you make it up? What were you trying to build on? Other struggles? Other government policies and plans? Linkages to other campaigns or advocacy?
  + How **did land issues play a role in this event?**
  + Where were **women** in this QUESTION/TOPIC? What roles did they play? Why?
  + How did any changes relate to people using pit latrines or defecating in the open?
  + What experiences were you building on?
  + Who was supporting you?  Who/what was against you?
  + What did you like most about this event/moment? And/or disliked?
  + Where did you live before? And at the time of THE QUESTION/TOPIC?
  + How did that combine with your other roles/functions/jobs?
* What happened when you did this? What got built? What relationships developed? How did approaches to sanitation change? Who paid for the QUESTION/TOPIC? How did they pay? Why did it work out like this? What was promised and expected at the time? Who was particularly targeted and included? (And follow up: Who was not?)
  + If you were faced with the same context again, what would you do differently?
  + Who else was a key actor at this time?

1. Mobilizing documents and maps & explicitly presenting our best guess about how events/infrastructures/processes etc. Are connected or disconnected? Or related?

**You can come to the interview with your timeline, documents, as well as your best guess about the puzzles or patterns** and present them to the memory holders to get their perspective.

Voicing out loud what you don’t know, as well as what you think you know gives an unique **possibility** for the interviewee to **object**!

Some social researchers would say you might **bias** the interview by **directing** the interviewee in a **certain direction**.

Others would say to the contrary, that by **enabling** interviewees to **object**, you are **increasing your objectivity**.

à You have to **find your own personal balance here**: the aim is not to influence persons or get them to think like you but to genuinely share your ideas and doubts and let room for people to agree, disagree, and elaborate further.

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| **To prepare for this,**  **you can generate a list of best guesses and questions about puzzles and patterns**  **for each map or document**  **as well as along the city sanitation timeline.** |

1. Additional tips

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