**Documenting (off-grid) Sanitation Collectives in urban Africa**

January 2021

Overdue project, Work Package 2

Authors: Julian Walker, Nelly Leblond, Richard Prosper, Catarina Simoes Mavila, Festo Dominic Makoba, Ibrahim Bakarr Bangura, Ilundi Polonia Cabral, Wilbard Kombe, Tim Ndezi, Sandra de Castro Roque.

1. **Project Background**:

The OVERDUE project interrogates the sanitation taboo across urban Africa, exploring infrastructural trajectories, sanitation promises, practices and experiences to support just sanitation. Focusing on the three fast-growing cities of Beira (Mozambique), Freetown (Sierra Leone), and Mwanza (Tanzania), OVERDUE aims:

1. To question and reframe dominant partial narratives about urban sanitation across Africa by enabling an intersectional perspective on what ‘just urban sanitation' means (what matters, to whom, why), and on what sanitation infrastructures promise to do and actually deliver.
2. To produce actionable knowledge based on a thorough analysis and evaluation of sanitation experiences, practices and investments and city-wide trajectories across different colonial legacies and postcolonial conditions.
3. To take stock of ongoing experimentation towards equitable sanitation pathways in African cities, analysing the actual and potential impact of initiatives to tackle the sanitation taboo in depth and at scale, and foster regional dialogue and exchange through networks operating at the levels of grassroots organisation, local governments, policy-makers and donors.

Core partners of the OVERDUE project are The Bartlett Development Planning Unit (UCL), the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (Sierra Leone), the Center for Community Initiatives (CCI Tanzania), Ardhi University, l’Etre Egale (France) and COWI (Mozambique and Denmark). OVERDUE is a three-year (2020-2023) UKRI/GCRF funded research project.

Work package 2, led by Julian Walker (UCL), approaches sanitation from the perspective of situated experiences (what sanitation and for whom) and of situated practices (what type of practices and by whom). This will start from scanning formal and informal collectives of sanitation providers across each city, to shed light on the existing off-grid sanitation practices and investment flows by informal dwellers. This is a first step to generate new conversations across sanitation users and workers, and strengthen local capacities to monitor existing facilities, assess needs, and improve sanitation access and services.

**Contact person:** Nelly Leblond[n.leblond@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:n.leblond@ucl.ac.uk); Julian Walker [julian.walker@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:julian.walker@ucl.ac.uk)

**2. Objective of this data collection tool**

To develop a database characterising the different collectives in each city which are involved in different ways in sanitation. The starting point is off-grid sanitation, but collectives working across the on-grid/off-grid divide also come under the scope of this database. This database is both a resource for the project and for other stakeholders involved in promoting sanitation justice.

**3. Definitions**

**3.1 Off/on grid sanitation**

Sanitation systems are often distinguished as:

1. **On grid or gridded sanitation:** any toilet system connected to sewers for waste removal. Gridded sanitation combines 2 main features: (1) connected infrastructure which transports waste from the site of emission to sites of treatment, disposal and reuse, and (2) an overseeing institution, public or private, who is in charge of maintaining the pipes and pumps which form the grid.
2. **Off grid sanitation**: any toilet system not connected to a main grid, comprising facilities such as pit latrines, toilets connected to a septic tank, compositing toilets, biogas toilets, or hanging toilets.

This binary classification glosses over the **heterogeneity of each category. Off-grid sanitation**, despite the common attribute of not being connected by a network of pipes, varies greatly in terms of (1) **containment** (from on-site disposal, to manual and mechanical removal, to direct release), (2) **treatment** (from on-site processing, to simple storage) (3) **governance** (some systems being serviced by municipal utilities while others primarily rely on individual interventions). Gridded systems vary too, from gravity sewers (relying on elevation differentials to move wastewater towards sewage treatment plants), to septic tank effluent drainage systems, whereby only the effluents exiting from tanks collecting the solid residues are channelled through the sewer network.

Furthermore, some sanitation infrastructure is **ambiguous** to classify and some **places and practices hybrid both systems.** For example, simplified sewerage sits in between grid and off-grid systems as it connects several toilets to shallowly buried plastic pipes and often relies on community-based investment and maintenance. Pit emptiers servicing typically off-grid pit latrines can empty their vacuum trucks in sewers, creating direct connections between off-grid and on-grid sanitation. And finally, at the city scale, systems often co-exist, and users might navigate across on-grid and off-grid facilities. In short, the on/off grid distinction does not always hold scrutiny.

However though the **on/off grid** **dichotomy** is not always clear from an infrastructural and material perspective, it **exists in theory and in practice.** Historically, there has been a tendency to see gridded sanitation as the desirable and modern solution, channelling attention and funds to this system while overlooking off-grid options. As a result, pit latrines and on-site sanitation systems have often benefited from less investments and reduced political support while remaining largely informal and under documented. Recently, some actors have shifted direction and committed exclusively to off-grid solutions (for example the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has turned the deprivation of connections to water, sewer, and electrical lines, into a necessary feature of reinvented toilets[[1]](#footnote-1)). Since both categories are mobilized, it makes sense to register and analyse how they are used by collectives engaged in sanitation and how they are associated to ideals, values and expectations.

In this research project, to counter the historical and political marginalisation of off-grid sanitation systems, we will start by documenting off-grid sanitation collectives. However, given the lack of a clear dichotomy between on- and off-grid we may also document some on-grid collectives which are linked to or closely associated with off-grid practices or suggested as highly important by off grid collective members. Hopefully, this will shed light on a broader set of actors and mechanisms engaged towards just sanitation and will draw us beyond clear cut boundaries and distinctions.

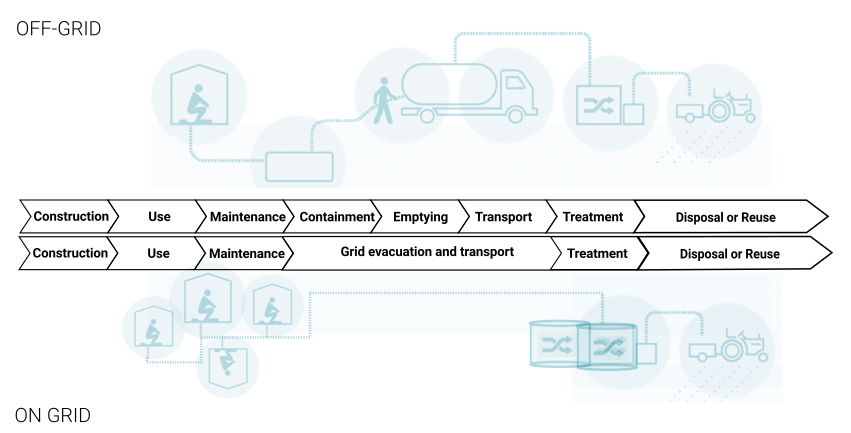
* 1. **Sanitation Collectives**

**Sanitation collectives** are understood here as groups of actors who engage in sanitation related activities OR that have led campaigns and mobilized to improve sanitation access, quality or services.

Sanitation collectives can be **formal** (for example a private business, or an NGO) or **informal** (pit emptiers with no official work contract or status), and can **directly work in sanitation** (e.g. Infrastructure provision, management and cleaning, collection, disposal of waste, treatment and reuse) or be **indirectly engaged with sanitation provision and uses** (e.g. markets associations, women’s NGOs, residents lobbying the municipality etc).

The focus is on **collectives rather than individuals** because (1) individual experiences and practices are dealt with in a further step of WP2 (through shadowing and diaries) and (2) the objective is to identify groups for further engagement at the community and city scale. However some **actors who work individually** (e.g. pit emptiers) may nonetheless be part of a ***very* informal collective** – i.e. they may be part of a wider unstructured group who for example have unwritten rules about which parts of the cities each individual covers, coordination around where they dump their sludge, or exchange information and knowledge with each other. Such groups could be covered as **‘informal collectives’**

Though there is no exhaustive list of sanitation collectives – any group of actors or institution can enter the list if it starts advocating for sanitation or engages with sanitation related activities- **one can think of sanitation collectives as distributed along sanitation chains.** At each stage, groups of actors who govern, regulate, invest, assess, use, perform, maintain, clean, repair, oppose, monitor, protest, sabotage, or derive profit from are likely to be on the list of sanitation collectives.



**4. Process**

**4.1 Identifying Collectives**

As a first step you will need to compile an initial list of sanitation collectives in the city where you work (Freetown, Mwanza or Beira). You can use the template registry located in your city Teams folder (City Teams>City Sanitation Collectives WP2 Folder> “Registry Sanitation Collectives.xls”). In order to develop a list of different sanitation collectives please draw on the following sources:

* City sanitation profiles produced by WP 1;
* Outputs from the sanitation festivals;
* Snowballing: During interviews with stakeholders and members of sanitation collectives (as per 4.2 below), ask them about other sanitation collectives they might know and add any new sanitation collective that they mention which you were not already aware of.;
* Other: observations and discussions with users might also stir you towards sanitation collectives.

**4.2 Interviews with collective representatives**

Drawing from your initial list of sanitation collectives, please identity members of these collectives to interview to gather information about their collectives.

**Who to interview?**: Your selection of interviewees should be based on the following criteria:

* Following up on introductions, start with the contact person that you have been given.
* However if the contact person does not personally work on sanitation related activities ask for an interviewee *directly involved in/ who knows about the sanitation work of the collective.*
* Please **make sure to include**, as relevant, (a) collectives **lead by women** or with a heavy representation of **women members** and/ or (b) **focused on gender issues related to sanitation** (e.g. linkages between sanitation and gender based violence, or menstrual hygiene or women’s unpaid household and community care work)

**How many interviews?**: We anticipate that in each city you should conduct around (20 - 30) interviews ensuring that you represent the full range of collective types active in your city – starting from an initial list of the collective types that you are aware of in your city (see 4.1, above).

**Interview process:** Please use the interview guide in Appendix 1 to structure your interview.

**Recording the interviews**: There is no need to record and type up a full transcript of the interviews – please use the interview guide in appendix 1 to capture your notes. Please also take photos of sanitation collection members and their spaces, subject to interviewee’s consent. If you wish to record to keep a record of the interview to support your note taking and checking, ask for interviewee’s consent to record first and make sure they are aware you are recording the interview.

**5. Outputs**:

After the interviews you should have the following outputs:

* A signed consent form for each interview;
* Notes for each interview using the proforma in Appendix 1;
* An ongoing/ live Excel table called “Analysis Matrix” to collate the findings of all interviews, containing the list of sanitation collectives, summarising the main points of the interview as well as adding new sanitation collectives identified during the interview.
* Photos of sanitation collectives and offices/ headquarters, places of operation as relevant. Though the photos are likely to be of limited photographic value they might be extremely valuable for the research as they are likely to contain numerous details that you might not have the time to notice or make sense of at the time of the interview, but which can turn out informative and revealing in the long term.

**Appendix 1: Interview guide: Sanitation Collectives**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Step/ Question** | **Notes** |
| Read the project information out to the interviewee and give them the project information form (Appendix 2) | Tick box to show this has been done |
| Read through the consent form and obtained the consent of the interviewee (written or oral) | Tick box to show this has been done |
| **Background information on the interview, and observations & remarks you find relevant but could not enter in the boxes below:** | |
| **Interviewee details** | |
| Name:  Age: (exact or range)  Sex:  (To be coded in final database: City\_Gender\_range\_interview\_number. Ex.: Beria/Female/in her 40s/ interview 11 à B\_F\_40\_11 |  |
| Phone number:  Address:  Email as appropriate:  (Not to be included in Final database) |  |
| **Collective details** | |
| Do you self-identify as a collective, or do you see themselves as a group of individual sanitation workers?  *If you do not self-identify as a collective, use the adapted question below in italics or put ‘not applicable’ as relevant.* |  |
| What is the (official/ informal) name of your collective?  *What do people call your trade/ profession/ activity?* |  |
| How many members does your collective have? *(ask to estimate if necessary)*  *How many people are conducting your trade/ activity in your area?* | Please note if number is estimated |
| Do your number of workers/members change?  How/ why? |  |
| Who is typically part of your collective/ trade? *(prompt if necessary e.g. women/ men, occupations, other key characteristics, age, ethnic group, tenure status)* |  |
| If women are involved in the collective/activity, what do they do? Are the women and men doing the same kind of work? |  |
| Who doesn’t join your collective/ trade (and why?) *(e.g. gender, age, tenure)* |  |
| What roles does your collective/ trade play in relation to sanitation? (*advocacy, information, sanitation provision roles)*  *Be as specific as possible ex. “Emptying pits of businesses and disposing of the waste in landfill”* |  |
| What are the organizations that you work with/for regarding sanitation?  Explain the relation: How do they work with the organisation? (eg. X gives the licence; NGO B is training them, and gave them protective equipment.) |  |
| What type of organization is your collective? *(is it an enterprise, a CBO, formal registered or informal, other key characteristics?)* |  |
| Which parts of the city/ wider areas does your collective represent/ work in? (how many settlements which type etc)  *This objective is to map where the collective operates so make sure the information provided is precise enough and enables you to do so* |  |
| Does your collective have an office/center/address (could be exact or geographic coordinates identified afterwards) |  |
| **Beneficiaries/Clients/Person served by the collective** | |
| How many people/ clients/ households do you serve (as relevant)? |  |
| Who are the typical clients/beneficiaries of your collective/ trade? *(prompt if necessary e.g. women/ men, occupations, other key characteristics, age, ethnic group, tenure status)* |  |
| Who is not served/reached/included/targeted by your collective/ trade (and why?) *(e.g. gender, age, tenure, revenue)* |  |
| **Costs and revenues** |  |
| What are the costs incurred by your collective? What do you have to pay for? |  |
| Which revenues do you receive and from whom? |  |
| **Role in the project** | |
| Would you be interested to be involved in the project? How might your collective be interested in being involved in our project?  N.b. phrase this to avoid making an implicit ‘promise’.  *Examples of involvement: being informed, participating if the area becomes a case study, attending project workshops and activities?)* |  |
| Other information or element you might want to talk to us about? |  |
| **Other contacts** |  |
| Are there other sanitation collectives that you think would be relevant for us to get in contact with? |  |

**Appendix 3: Information sheet**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **A picture containing text, clipart  Description automatically generated**  **A picture containing text, clipart  Description automatically generated** | **Summary**  **If you agree to participate, you must read the full version** |
| * The project is called: “OVERDUE: Tackling the sanitation taboo across urban Africa” and is carried out in collaboration by UCL, the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC), COWI, L’Etre Egale, Ardhi University, and CCI Tanzania. * The objective is to support just sanitation in African cities. Just sanitation is safe for users, providers, and the environment, and is free from violence, fear, shame, health risks and humiliations. * You were chosen because we think your experiences and practices can help us understand sanitation. * You don’t have to participate. You can also stop participating without having to give any explanation. * Your participation is voluntary and you will not receive monetary compensation for participating. * All your responses will be confidential. It will not be possible to recognize you unless you give consent for photos/recordings of you to be used. * You can refuse photos, recordings and video. You can indicate when you are sharing sensitive information that you do not want us to quote. * We will answer any question you might have. * If you agree to participate, we will record your consent. * If you have any questions about our work you can contact Prof Adriana Allen ([a.allen@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:a.allen@ucl.ac.uk)). * For complaints you can contact Prof Michael Heinrich ([m.heinrich@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:m.heinrich@ucl.ac.uk)) or Prof Lynn Ang ([l.ang@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:l.ang@ucl.ac.uk)) * More information: <https://overdue-justsanitation.net/> |

1. **Research Project title**

OVERDUE “Tackling the sanitation taboo across urban Africa”.

1. **Invitation**

You are being invited to take part in this research project. Before you decide to do so, it is important you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

1. **What is the project’s purpose?**

The research is part of a 3-year academic study carried out in collaboration by UCL, the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC), COWI, L’Etre Egale, Ardhi University, and CCI Tanzania. This research aims to understand the range and outcomes of existing off-grid sanitation practices and investment flows deployed by informal dwellers individually and collectively in Beira (Mozambique), Freetown (Sierra Leone), and Mwanza (Tanzania).

1. **Why have I been chosen?**

You have been chosen because your story can help us build an understanding of these off-grid sanitation practices and investment flows. We believe your experiences and insights will be very important in understanding community development for sanitation.

1. **Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you should indicate your agreement in the consent form. You can still withdraw your consent at any time during the interview, but also withdraw any data given to us up until one month after the interview or focus group if you change your mind. You do not have to give a reason.

1. **What will happen to me if I take part?**

You will be asked to participate in informal interviews and discussions about the sanitation practices and developments you are involved in. You may also wish to agree to be followed during your quotidian routine because as a sanitation worker your experience is important. We may also like to video or take photographs of you. The interviews, discussions and following/shadowing may be voice recorded or video recorded depending on your consent. You do not have to agree to be photographed or video recorded to participate in the rest of the project. If you would like to share something confidential with the research team, please do so in the private interview rather than the group discussion so we can better ensure confidentiality.

1. **What will happen to my data?**

Notes will be taken during the meetings, discussions, interviews, and shadowing. Anonymity in these notes will be maintained with pseudonyms and documents will be stored securely. Researchers cannot guarantee that the participant’s anonymity will not be breached on the recordings by fellow members of the focus group, but can guarantee that this will be anonymised upon transcription. Your

name will not appear in transcripts, publications or reports, and the researchers will not share your personal information with anyone outside of the research team. For videos and photographs, you can choose whether or not to take part. We will ask your permission to use your image in a public display.

1. **Local Data Protection Privacy Notice**

The controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Officer provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at [data-protection@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:data-protection@ucl.ac.uk)

This project has been ethically approved by UCL Research Ethics Committee, for any more information please contact the principal researcher Prof Adriana Allen ([a.allen@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:a.allen@ucl.ac.uk)), and for complaints please contact the chairs of UCL Research Ethics Committee: Prof Michael Heinrich ([m.heinrich@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:m.heinrich@ucl.ac.uk)) or Prof Lynn Ang ([l.ang@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:l.ang@ucl.ac.uk))

1. **Who is organising and funding the research?**

The project is funded by UKRI/Global Challenge Research Fund (GCRF) and involves members from UCL Development Planning Unit (<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/development/> ), the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC, <https://www.slurc.org/>), COWI (<https://www.cowi.com/>), L’Etre Egale (<https://etreegale.org/>) , Ardhi University (<http://www.aru.ac.tz/>), CCI Tanzania (<https://ccitanzania.org/>) . More information: <https://overdue-justsanitation.net/>

**Appendix 4: Interviewee consent form**

**Research project title:** OVERDUE “Tackling the sanitation taboo across urban Africa”

**Research investigator**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

· I agree to participate to the interview carried out by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(name of researcher) of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(name of the institution), to aid with the research of the OVERDUE project.

· I have read the information sheet related to the OVERDUE project and understand the aims of the project.

* I am aware of the topics to be discussed during the interview.
* I am fully aware that even if anonymity is breached in the notes and in the recordings (if you agree to be recorded), I will remain anonymous throughout data reported (transcripts) and that I have the right to leave the interview at any point.
* I am aware that I can withdraw my consent at any time during the interview, but also withdraw any data given up until one month after the interview if I change my mind. I do not have to give a reason.
* I am fully aware that data collected will be stored securely, safely and in accordance with Data Collection Act (1998).
* I am fully aware that I am not obliged to answer any question, but that I do so at my own free will.
* I am aware that I have the right to edit the transcript/notes of the interview once it has been completed.
* I am aware that I can make any reasonable changes to this consent form.
* The interview or extracts from it (such as quotations associated to a pseudonym) may be used in academic papers, policy papers or news articles, our website or in other media, in an archive of the project (after being anonymized).
* I do not expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation.
* I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I can contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future.

Participant name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| I confirm that I have read the consent form, have understood it, and agree to proceed  Participant signature:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | [FILL IN BY RESEARCHER]  When needed, the researcher can read the consent form to the interviewee, seek his/her oral consent, and sign below if obtained:  I confirm that I have read the consent form to the participant, s/he has understood, and has agreed to proceed  Researcher signature:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

Researcher signature:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. https://www.gatesfoundation.org/what-we-do/global-growth-and-opportunity/water-sanitation-and-hygiene/reinvent-the-toilet-challenge-and-expo [↑](#footnote-ref-1)