

# REMEMBERING AND NARRATING CONFLICT

Resources for doing historical  
memory work



Centro Nacional  
de Memoria Histórica

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memory work**

© 2013, Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica y University of British Columbia

ISBN:

Impreso en Colombia – Printed in Colombia

Primera edición en Colombia, septiembre de 2013

### **Impresión**

Imprenta Nacional de Colombia

Este es un documento público cuyo texto completo se puede consultar en  
[www.centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co](http://www.centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co)

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This project was generously supported by a grant from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Swiss Government. Support was also received for the May 2010 workshop from the Faculty of Arts HSS Symposium Grants and the School of Social Work at the University of British Columbia.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The production of Remembering and Narrating the Conflict benefited from the wise contributions and generous support of a great group of people. This material is the product of their collective input and enthusiasm with the project.

Thanks to the team of the Historical Memory Commission of Colombia who produced and generously shared the initial resource material and took the initiative to see the material translated and adapted to be used in other parts of the world.

Special thanks to Mo Blekker who supported this project intellectually, financially and provided contacts and advice.

Thanks to the School of Social Work, the Liu Institute for Global Issues, and the Faculty of Arts at the University of British Columbia for logistical and financial support.

Our special acknowledgment to the many memory practitioners and experts who provided thoughtful and creative comments. As well as those who participated in the workshop, listed above, we also received feedback and contributions from:

**Colombia:** Martha Nubia Bello and Maria Emma Wills, Colombian Historical Memory Commission

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**Kashmir:** Rita Machanda, South Asia Forum for Human Rights

**Kosovo:** Nora Ahmetaj, Centre for Research, Documentation and Publication

**Liberia:** Mark Marvey, Naymote, and Aaron Weah, International Center for Transitional Justice

**Palestine:** Sami Adwan, Peace Research Institute in the Middle East

**Sri Lanka:** Malathi de Alwis, International Centre for Ethnic Studies

**Uganda:** Ketty Anyeko, Justice and Reconciliation Project, and Chris Dolan, Refugee Law Project

**United States:** Brinton Lykes, Boston College

Thanks to the team of students who provided their feedback, enthusiasm, support and work during the workshop “Dialogues on Memory: Strategies for reconstructing memories in conflict and post conflict zones”: Katherine Fobear, Julie Okot Bitek, Laura Lee, Lara Rosenoff, Beth Stewart, and Anastasia Shesterinina. Our special thanks to interpreters Veronika Miralles, Steve Stewart and Sara Koopman.

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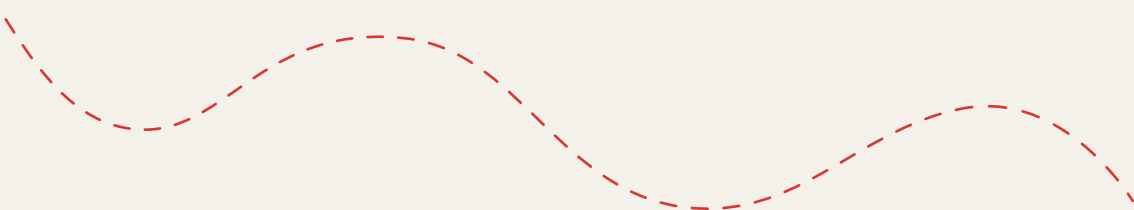
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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS IN ORIGINAL SPANISH VERSION

The development of these tools for reconstructing historical memory was made possible by the financial and institutional support of:

- Presidential Agency for Social Action and International Cooperation
- Swedish Agency for International Development (ASDI)
- United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)
- United States Institute of Peace (USIP).

Our thanks to the organizations that joined us in these activities for their generosity and enthusiasm with which they offered their innumerable contributions. In particular we express our appreciation to:

- *Corporación María Cano*, María Cano Community Development Corporation (Montería)
- *Fundación del Sinú*, Sinú Foundation (Montería)
- *Colectivo de Comunicaciones Montes de María Línea 21*, Communications Collective of Montes de María Line 21
- *La Asociación COMFE Narrar para Vivir*, The COMFE Association Telling to Live
- *Mujer y Futuro*, Women and Future, Barranquilla Office
- *Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad*, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Cartagena office
- *Red de Empoderamiento de las mujeres de Cartagena y Bolívar*, The Women's Empowerment Network of Cartagena and Bolívar
- *Fundación para el Desarrollo Humano Comunitario*, (FUNDEHUMAC), The Foundation for Community Human Development, Santa Marta.
- *Asociación de Mujeres del Magdalena*, The Women's Association of Magdalena
- *Organización Wayuumsurat Mujeres Tejiendo Paz*, Wayuumsurat Organization, Women Weaving Peace.

Nationally, several networks provided suggestions and regional contacts. In particular, we express our gratitude to:

- *Iniciativas de Mujeres Colombianas por la Paz*, Colombian Women's Initiatives for Peace



- *Ruta Pacífica de Mujeres*, Women's Peaceful Way
- *Corporación Humanas*, The Humanas Community Development Corporation.

We received insightful comments on the content of this material from a group of experts on memory and gender issues, including memory workers in the Caribbean region. We thank:

- María Eugenia Vásquez, The Women and Future Organization (Corporación Mujer y Futuro)
- Luz Piedad Caicedo, The Humanas Organization
- Carlos Beristáin, member and coauthor of REMHI in Guatemala. Advisor to the Paraguayan Truth Commission and consultant to the Inter-American Human Rights Institute
- Pau Pérez, Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Expert in psycho-social work with experience in Mexico, El Salvador and Chile
- Ronald Solís, Coordinator of the Reconciliation Area of the Office of Human Rights of the Archbishopric of Guatemala
- Félix Reátegui, Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission
- Kimberly Theidon, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, Harvard University, and Executive Director of the Praxis Institute for Social Justice
- Clemencia Rodriguez, Associate Professor, University of Oklahoma and expert in community media for peace
- María Angélica Garzón, María Eugenia Lora and Soraya Bayuelo of the Montes de María Communications Collective

The opinions set forth in this toolkit are not necessarily those of the Colombian Historical Memory Commission, the Swiss government, nor of the other networks and organizations listed. Nevertheless, the merits and wisdom of this material would not have been achieved without their contributions and critiques. To all of them and to the participants of the workshops, the victims who generously shared with us their memories and thoughts, our deepest thanks.



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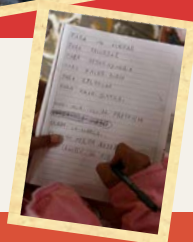
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# Chapter A

## A

### INTRODUCTION

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▲ Photo by Jesús A. Colorado, 2010

#### A 1. HISTORICAL MEMORY WORK IN CONFLICT/POST-CONFLICT TIMES

---

What motivates the urge to reconstruct, recover or reclaim “the past”?

Why remember? What do we remember and how?

---

The types of memory work described here take place in highly contentious and diverse contexts where a host of historical, political and cultural factors come to shape a complex landscape of memory claims, projects and discourses. Memory and memorialization have taken a center place in the work and priorities of a large number of community groups, civil society organizations, victims/survivors groups and non-governmental organizations in conflict/postconflict times. *Remembering and Narrating Conflict* considers the lessons learned and the many dilemmas that emerge from this work. It offers resource materials for critically engaging with questions of how to create and foster plural spaces for narrative and testimonial encounters; who and how should be involved, and in what; and how to contribute to tasks of historical clarification, truth telling, or dignifying the memories of the victims when memory constitutes a critical and disputed terrain.

Commemoration and memorialization projects have been called on in transitional justice and historical memory interventions as one of the key mechanisms that can help societies and groups come to terms with a past of war or mass violence and move societies towards non-violence and no repetition. Memory workers, indigenous peoples, activists and social organizations worldwide have located their work within this broader goal, while critically assessing its premises. In acknowledging the relevance of memorialization and engagement with memory as part of the right to know and to reparation, they challenge assumptions that a violent past is something that can be “dealt with” through top-down interventions, a commission, a monument, or an apology. Instead many such groups have activated plural, autonomous, long term, and participatory processes to recover, reclaim and/or find evidence of past violations and their impacts, while placing those who have been traditionally silenced and their knowledge at the center of memory work.

*Remembering and Narrating Conflict* seeks to promote the construction and reconstruction of memories that challenge the existing power imbalances between the personal stories of victims and the institutionalized versions of the past of political leaders, armed groups, state officials, or the media. The hope is that this sort of memory work becomes a

dynamic site to make the voices, knowledge, and interpretations of victims central in narratives and histories of conflicts and to strengthen social organizations, communities, and victims' organizations. This is the sort of work that is meant here by the term "historical memory," working with individual and collective memory(ies) as a dynamic source and means to document and interrogate the past and to understand the varied ways in which memory informs every day life choices and claims of survivors of mass violence. These resources aim to support memory workers to be sensitive to political differences and differences of gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, race, caste, region, religion, language, age, and physical ability that cut across victimized communities, the armed actors of the conflict, and even the organizations that do memory work.

How the past is remembered, forgotten, or silenced is a highly contentious issue that can put the safety of memory workers at risk or keep social tensions alive. It is not easy to do memory work, particularly in contexts of ongoing conflict and or a post-conflict context, and so these resources also aim to support memory workers' ability to recognize and respond to the risks of doing this work.

— The resources here can be used in various ways. You may find a particular memory work activity presented useful in your context – or you might want to adapt it. You might want to hold a workshop, of anywhere from an afternoon to several days, using several of these activities. You might not choose to use any of the activities but find the discussion of issues to consider before doing memory work useful. You may be particularly interested in the tips for providing psychosocial support when doing memory work. There are a variety of resources here and we hope that some of them will be useful for your work.

## **A 2. HOW THESE RESOURCES CAME TOGETHER**

These resources began as a project of the Colombian Historical Memory Group (*GMH: Grupo de Memoria Historica*), which was created in 2005 as part of the National Reconciliation and Reparations Commission. Its mission was to develop an inclusive and comprehensive narrative of the reasons for the emergence and the evolution of the internal armed

conflict, armed groups, and their competing claims. The commission also aimed to document the memories generated in the midst of cycles of violence, and to privilege the memories of the victims whose voices have until now been suppressed, subordinated or silenced.

As part of that work the commission held memory workshops around Colombia with two aims: to elicit voices that had been silenced, and to identify and document other versions of what had happened in the country. Many who participated in these workshops appreciated the various methods that were used and wanted to know more about them so that they could hold similar sessions, and so a toolkit was created that spoke to the what, how and why of this sort of work. It is available online in Spanish: <http://www.centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/descargas/informes2009/cajadeherramientas/presentacionbaja.pdf>.

The toolkit was well received in Colombia, and it was suggested that it could also be useful to those doing memory work in other contexts of violence. To make the toolkit more appropriate and relevant in other countries and contexts, a dialogue was opened, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swiss Government. Thirty-three memory workers in twenty countries (across four continents) were asked to read and comment on an initial English translation and adaption of the toolkit. Twenty of these then attended a workshop held in Vancouver, BC, Canada May 25th and 26th, 2011.







▲ Workshop participants, photo by Lara Rosenoff 2010

### **A 3. DOING MEMORY WORK IN CONFLICT AND POST-CONFLICT CONTEXTS: ISSUES AND TENSIONS**

The discussions during the workshop with memory workers in Vancouver coalesced in particular around key issues that suggest the tensions, dilemmas, possibilities, political and social contexts in which practitioners around the world advance historical memory work. What we learned from this workshop was that when people in very different situations engage in historical memory reconstruction, there are not certainties or recipes directing what or how to do but rather dilemmas, questions, tentative insights and attention to the changes in context. We suggest doing memory work starting from this set of questions [or those encounter in the preparation of the work] rather than a set of hard and fast principles about what works or how memory work should be done. If well these questions are briefly addressed in the following pages, they are also touched in various ways throughout the text.

#### **A 3.1 IS THERE A MOMENT FOR TRUTH / STORY TELLING?**

Truth telling and memorialization have been thought of in transitional justice or official memory projects as critical mechanisms that help societies move through transitions, for example, in the work of Truth and Reconciliation commissions and tribunals. However, memory practitioners and groups question whether historical memory work is only to be conducted at a particular time, specifically during transitional periods (establishment of a peace deal or a democratic opening), or if rather it needs to be thought as a process and beyond transitions. Here considerations of both safety and momentum for the work are important. It can be dangerous to speak truth and seek justice in polarized communities, especially if perpetrators are still in power, but there have been several cases where this work was used to either remove perpetrators from power or keep candidates who were perpetrators from winning elections. There is no linear set of steps, nor types of memory work following any particular set of stages of a conflict or post conflict situation. Rather it is more useful to think of different methods of documentation as a web or a spiral to draw on as best fits a context.

### **A 3.2 WHOSE STORY IS IT TO TELL? WHOSE VOICE IS HEARD OR SILENCED?**

Memory workers may want to place survivors in control of both the process and the outcome of memory work (i.e., how stories are told), but this is neither a naïve nor an easily achievable goal. Some present at the international workshop were themselves struggling with how to share and interpret survivors' stories and others felt that memory workers should not be the ones to edit, order, organize or interpret the stories but rather should always do this with survivors themselves.

You may want survivors to be the ones who choose what shape the stories take, be it a book, a community mural or memorial, a performance, a town assembly, a video, a lesson plan for children etc. This may best be discussed at the beginning, rather than the end, of doing memory work. However, ethical questions are ongoing when working with these stories and bringing them to various audiences and settings. It is important to consider contentious coexistence and local competing narratives when dealing with narratives of division and dissent within the local communities, regions or even nations. Trust and trust-building is a key element for negotiating and establishing ownership and autonomy of narratives and exploring ways to tell stories within polarized communities.

### **A 3.3 THE POLITICS OF NAMING AND TELLING: VICTIMS OR SURVIVORS?**

In Colombia the term 'victim' is used by the 'victims movement' that has re-appropriated the term (see the discussion in section B 1.5). In other international contexts, memory workers prefer the term 'survivor', arguing that victims are often asked only about how they were victimized, and share only their stories of pain. One of the issues is the extent that a location as victims may silence other stories, and whether room can be made for stories of how they survived, and for them to share their stories of resilience, recovery and resistance. For example, what skills did they develop to live near their perpetrator neighbor? How did their spirituality or dreams sustain them? This is particularly true for survivors of sexual violence. Doing so honors their agency and offers resources to those who continue to experience violence.

### **A 3.4 WHOSE MEMORIES SHOULD BE INCLUDED? AT WHAT POINT AND FOR WHAT?**

There was much discussion at the international workshop as to whether and how to include perpetrators in memory processes, particularly in non-official or civil society led initiatives of historical memory reconstruction. Some thought that it was essential to do so to get a fuller picture of what had happened and that if memory work is understood as a process for restoring balance, it is essential for perpetrators to listen to the stories of victims.

Others argued that victims would not feel, or be, safe if perpetrators were listening or otherwise included – particularly when perpetrators continue to be in power and when they manipulate memory for their purposes. A pivotal element of these processes is to create an atmosphere of trust for people to feel that what they are saying is important to others, and such an atmosphere may not be possible if perpetrators are there. Some felt that perpetrators should be heard and offered opportunities for transformation, but in a separate process (perhaps needing different methodologies) – and that they should not be listened to at the expense of victims.

It makes a difference if perpetrators are also victims, and if perpetrators are from inside or outside of a community. It also makes a difference if perpetrators come forward voluntarily, seeking reconciliation. Some felt that reconciliation should not be the goal, but rather transformation. One participant argued they should be called protagonists not perpetrators. A separate but related issue is the inclusion of those from dominant society who were not directly perpetrators but who stood by while violence happened to others. Memory work can also serve to unsettle and transform them.

### **A 3.5 WHAT DOES TRANSFORMATION LOOK LIKE?**

How do we make memory work strategic? How do we link this strategic vision to matters of culture and cultural reconstruction? How can we

design strategies for collecting stories that safely maintain a record of the voices of the victims?

Some participants in the international workshop felt that a transitional justice focus on formal accountability mechanisms put memory work in a disadvantaged position because it tends to be thought of as a merely individual issue. It was argued that reparations and legal processes often open more wounds than they close. Some reflected that legal proceedings did not make room for mourning nor for the expression of multiple truths. There can be a divergence between the goals of justice and reconciliation and those of localized memory work. These observations invite a critical reflection on how memory work can help in the transformation of contexts of violence and the fragmentation of social life.

Others however thought it was important that memory reconstruction activities be structured so as to provide material that could be later used for legal processes. Some did both informal work and arranged for victims to give sworn affidavits to attorneys for use at a later time when formal mechanisms might be available. Some felt it was important to do memory work within the auspices of an official government body for accountability purposes, some that it was important to be legally recognized, while others argued for the freedom of having neither of these and rather for fostering civil initiatives. Memory work is necessarily political and calls for an exploration of purpose and recognition of risks.





- ▲ International memory workshop in Vancouver, 2011. Photo by workshop participant and photographer Jesús Abad Colorado, who is a member of the Colombian Historical Memory Group. His powerful visual memory photography can be seen online.



# Chapter B

## B

### THE CONCEPTUAL DIMENSION OF MEMORY WORK

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▲ Photo by Jesús A. Colorado, 2009



## B 1. SOCIO-POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF MEMORY

### B 1.1 MEMORIES, POWER AND SOCIAL ORDER

---

***Let's reflect:***

What is memory? Who does memory belong to?

What is history? Who owns history?

---

Every social order is maintained by emphasizing particular memories that establish a certain version of history. In these narratives some people are glorified and granted hero status. They usually belong to a certain social class and/or political group, as well as a particular gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, region, religion, caste and language group.

These narratives about the past, while extolling some groups, devalue others by transforming their differences into justifications for discrimination. These versions are either accepted or confronted by the alternative stories produced by the excluded. Memory, therefore, is a field in tension where hierarchies, inequalities and social exclusions are either constructed and reinforced, or challenged and transformed.

Memory is also a field where social and political legitimacies, friendships and enmities are woven. People, on the basis of their memories, evaluate the decisions and strategies of the actors in the conflict, and adopt different attitudes towards the social order, institutions, and political and social actors. Through their memories, for example, people give these actors different degrees of legitimacy or illegitimacy. They identify with some while deeply rejecting others. They raise different complaints in the face of violence and locate themselves differently regarding reparations.

This is why we suggest beginning any memory work exercise by recognizing that building memory is a political act and a social practice.



***Remember:***

Building memory is a political act and a social practice.

Memory is a field in tension, which can either build and strengthen or challenge and transform hierarchies, inequalities and social exclusions. It is also a field where political and social legitimacies, friendships and enmities are woven.

## **B 1.2 SOCIAL POLARIZATION AND THE ETHICAL HORIZON OF HISTORICAL MEMORY**

***Let's reflect:***

How does armed conflict affect memories?

What histories do the armed actors tell about the conflict and their actions?

Are there differences between the facts and the histories told by the armed groups?

In a society in conflict, war produces a certain type of order founded on polarization. This polarization unfolds not only on battlefields, but also leaves its imprint on all spaces of life in society.

The armed actors on either side are looking to install their versions of the past as absolute truths, and present their particular interests as, for example, patriotic or revolutionary-grassroots demands. In this desire to control history and memory, the actors in the conflict manipulate versions of what happened to justify their actions and stigmatize those political and social interpretations that they oppose.

In such a context, an effort to seek justice for victims aims to reject the imposition of a political memory with winners from one group or another that would legitimize the acts committed, even the worst atrocities, by justifying them as done in defence of "the homeland" (Lira, 2001:49) or in fighting for the people.

Even in community and personal arenas, individuals and collectives often choose what should be remembered, aiming to preserve the image of unity, uprightness, and heroism to be transmitted to third parties in a communal history. Uncomfortable memories and facts that confront the group with a more complex past where some of its members have not only been capable of acts of heroism but also petty and vindictive initiatives that put the survival of the community itself at risk are thereby silenced. This self-censorship applies to both communities and individuals and entire societies who stick to discourses that highlight attributes, progress and positive actions, but ignore, silence and evade the shameful episodes of history or their complicities, thus contributing to validation and potentially repetition of these episodes.

For dominant groups the issue becomes how to embrace uncomfortable “unsettling” memories as powerful pedagogical moments, which can potentially heal and transform. The question is whether an initiative to democratically construct the historical memory of the conflict may facilitate the elaboration, re-elaboration and transmission of more complex and plural stories about the war at individual, community, regional and national levels (Theidon, 2007, 2002).

---

***Remember:***

The exercise of constructing historical memory can aim to be:

*Responsible:* analyzing the facts as a whole, compiling not only those laudable aspects of communities, but also failures and mistakes that were committed.

*Democratic:* recognizing and respecting the diversity of voices and subjectivities

*Ethical:* publicly documenting, evaluating and recognizing the violent acts committed by all of the actors of the conflict, particularly those which violate international humanitarian law or human rights.

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### B 1.3 GENDER, RACE, AND OTHER SOCIAL LOCATION CONSIDERATIONS

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#### *Let's reflect:*

How do gender, race, class, and other social locations affect how people experience and remember the violence and resistance to it?

How do these identities inform memory work?

---

It is important to recognize differences of gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other social locations that shape both violence and the ways it is remembered. The types of violence suffered often differ by identity and social location. Women, for example, are more likely to suffer sexual violence than men. More subtly, the impacts of the same violent acts are not the same across different people, groups, and communities. The meanings constructed in the face of what happened can be substantially different if they were, for example, suffered by men or women, children or adults. What is important to one may be insignificant to another. The ways different groups of people process and make sense of harm and loss also differ.

---

Ethnic differences are particularly important, given that culture offers different resources for interpreting and facing what happened. Some violent actions can be devastating when they attack essential aspects of a culture or put into question basic beliefs for certain social groups. It is also essential to understand how racist, classist, sexist, and/or homophobic ideologies intersect and shape acts of mass violence against specific groups. It is also important to recognize differences because armed actors use different repertoires and modes of violence against women, men, sexual minorities, children, ethnic communities, etc. These practices martyr and mark bodies and minds in different ways, and often use languages and symbols aimed explicitly at wounding that which is significant to a particular group. The ability to notice and be sensitive to these differences is a challenge when doing memory work.

Of course none of us has only one social location. A person's identities as both a woman and as indigenous person not only intersect but interlock,

that is, both identities shape each other but systems of domination also tend to *reinforce* each other (Crenshaw 1991; Razack, 2002). This is another reason why it is important to consider social location when doing memory work. Women, racialized groups, and others who have a subordinate role in society have had fewer opportunities to speak, be heard, and analyzed. This is also clearly expressed in the work of remembering and what memories and voices are more often heard and silenced.

---

***Remember:***

Different forms of violence are experienced by men and women, adults and young people, members of indigenous groups, people of African heritage or other racialized groups, LGBT people, people with disabilities, people living in poverty and those in many other social locations.

Armed actors often target members of certain groups with a type of violence aimed at wounding that which is significant to them.

The impact of the violence suffered, and the meaning it has, also varies across groups, as does how they process harm and loss.

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## **B 1.4 THE BATTLES OF MEMORY AGAINST EXCLUSION AND SUPPRESSION**

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***Let's reflect:***

Why are some actors excluded from historical accounts?

What connection is there between the social groups that are excluded and the opportunities (or the lack thereof) for those individuals in society?

How are Indigenous understanding/practices of memory and healing incorporated into the process?

---

If war polarizes memories, a historical memory project that seeks to be inclusive of plural voices goes in the opposite direction. But to do so requires asking why certain stories are excluded from national history,

and why that history reinforces social and political inequalities and historical injustices.

Although today some may assume that the cries of equality, freedom and solidarity that inspired the democratic revolutions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century in Latin America, France, and the United States applied to all of their peoples, modern citizenship is actually founded on political inclusions and exclusions. The same can be said for countries with no revolutionary history and/or settler societies<sup>1</sup>, such as Canada, Australia, or New Zealand. In most of these countries' constitutions only white, educated, married men with property who were willing to bear arms in defense of the country and able to pay taxes were considered to have 'reason' and declared citizens with full rights.

By contrast, women, children, indigenous people, and black people were defined as "irrational", closer to the world of nature, emotions and impulses than to civilization and, therefore they were attributed the status of "dependent" citizens. Others, those considered "rational," would be called upon to make decisions on their behalf.

Thus the first definitions of citizenship, and the practices associated with them, fulfilled the role of regulating, excluding and discriminating against many voices and collective actors who were relegated to an "outside" of the centers of power and of the newly imagined national community made up of those citizens with full rights (Fraser, 1997; Wills, 2002 and 2007). The excluded, as "dependent citizens", would act in the sphere of the market or in the private sphere, while the public sphere would be reserved exclusively for those with full citizenship. Political exclusion was also accompanied by cultural discrimination, which negatively valued those attributes associated with gender, ethnicity, race, region, religion, caste, sexuality, politics, language, disability, and class difference.

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1 'Settler societies' are societies in which Europeans have settled, where their descendants have remained politically dominant over indigenous peoples, and where a heterogeneous society has developed in class, ethnic and racial terms (Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis, 1995).

This policy of exclusion also left its mark in the development of stories about national history that were formalized in school textbooks, museums, monuments and commemorative dates. In these epic tellings, elite men likened themselves to heroic figures as the “great founding fathers of the homeland”, i.e. white men of letters or of arms, most of whom were property owners. While their decisions and their participation in history acquired centrality and dignity, the participation of the excluded in social and political processes was marginalized and relegated to oblivion. Neither women, nor blacks, nor indigenous people were given a worthy place in these stories. Gays and lesbians were assigned to sites of disease and prison and were expelled from historical accounts of the construction of the nation.

Memory work can instead serve as a tool for the reaffirmation of those identities that are generally undervalued and persecuted, as a space for dialogue amongst voices that often do not know each other, and also as a sphere for struggle between different versions of the past. The compilation of historical accounts, which has until now largely been a space that has suppressed differences and political dissent, may become, through these processes of dialogue, a space for the recognition and positioning of social and cultural identities that have been devalued.

---

***Remember:***

Modern citizenship was actually founded on political inclusions and exclusions.

The development of historical accounts, up to now a space for the suppression of differences and political dissent, can be converted into a space for the recognition and positioning of the various social and cultural identities that have been largely devalued.

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## B 1.5 FROM PERSONAL MEMORY TO COLLECTIVE MEMORY: THE ROLE OF MEDIATORS

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### *Let's reflect:*

Who tells the story of the country, region, city, town or village?

Who are the outstanding people in that story and what facts seem important and to whom?

Are victims' experiences reflected in this collective memory?

Do our individual memories correspond with this memory?

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Memory, even personal memory, is a result of political and social practices, which are a product of the confrontation between actors with varying degrees of power. We are not born with a fixed memory or memories; we build it throughout our lives as we try to make sense of our personal and social history in an ongoing relationship with others and through social learning. This social character of memories becomes more palpable when we recognize that as humans we can remember without necessarily explicitly sharing our memories with others. Yet those memories, however intimate they might be, respond to experiences that are inscribed in the interpretive frameworks that we use to make sense of them. These frameworks organize meaning and selectivity [what gets remembered] for individual and collective remembrances (Stern, 2005).

In general these frameworks are shaped by our group and institutional memberships: family, church, school, universities, the arts, the press, radio, television, non-governmental organizations, political parties, youth groups; as well as by people in the community who provide leadership and social orientation such as elders, teachers, priests, health officials, or local authorities. Through our daily engagement with these groups, individuals, and settings, we learn certain ways of remembering, selecting and articulating our memories.

The individuals who have a place of honour in their communities and in these institutions serve as mediators who transform a multitude of events into collective memories. This transformation operates through

the construction and dissemination of interpretive frameworks through which groups select what deserves to be remembered, shared and honoured - and distinguish it from what should be kept silent, censored or forgotten in public or collective forums. Thus what memories we learn to judge as innocuous, inappropriate or openly against the interests of the nation, institutions, groups or communities has very little to do with chance, and much to do with political and social construction.

One of the most powerful mechanisms used to distinguish those memories that deserve to be shared from those which should never be verbalized to others is the traditional notion of what is public or communal. This is where asymmetries of power in the construction of collective memories are most clearly reflected. Not all individuals occupy the place from which one, on behalf of a group, can speak with authority and competence about what happened and interpret a collective past.

To the extent that societies become more complex, the spectrum of who can be a mediator is broader and there are more places where there is a struggle to establish the “official” versions. There will be versions of the past that are shared nationally. These are the ones that acquire, for example, a truth value upheld in national museums, holidays and history textbooks. But also (and not necessarily aligned with the former) regional, local, community and even family memories will be woven into these “official truths” or beyond them. At each level, some voices will prevail over others because of the social location they occupy, their competencies, and the resources they control. Even in a case of the same facts, seldom will national, regional, local, community and family memories of those facts or their meanings be uniform (Mallon, 1995).

As well as creating support or disaffection, mediators can instil feelings of shame and establish criteria for what should be said publicly. For example, the saying “don’t air dirty laundry” has often been a powerful tool for concealing violent practices that happen at home. But “don’t air dirty laundry” is also a tool used in the institutional arena, for example when the *esprit de corps* instilled by regular and irregular armies imposes



silence on its members in the face of criminal and morally reprehensible conduct in particular crimes of sexual violence, so as to protect their “good name”.

In the face of these silencing mechanisms, the social opportunity to confront the violent past means recognizing it as an issue that not only belongs to personal biographies and individual histories, but one that also belongs in the social and public sphere, and which can be resignified in rituals of social recognition, in judicial proceedings, and through reparations as appropriate (Lira, 2001). Put another way, a past that is socially shared is never without a private and personal dimension, but when the same social and political events have shaped a set of traumatic experiences for thousands of people, that affects social relations and so these past events need to be confronted at both the private and public level.

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***Remember:***

Both individual and collective memories are at the same time political, social, cultural and historical. Which memories we learn to judge as innocuous, inappropriate or openly against the interests of the nation, institutions, groups or communities has very little to do with chance and much to do with political and social construction.

Individuals who hold a place of honour in their communities and institutions serve as mediators who transform a multitude of events into collective memories. As well as support and disaffection, these mediations can instil feelings of shame and determine criteria for what should and can be told in public or in front of the community, and what should remain in silence and be self-censored.

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### ***Let's reflect:***

What associations come to mind when thinking of the concept of victim?

Do you prefer the term victim or survivor?

Should people who have experienced violence share their life stories?

With whom?, To what ends?

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Beyond the juridical definition of who is or is not a victim, there are sociological, psychosocial, and historical factors to take into account when, in the midst of a conflict, efforts are made to integrate the voices of victims in the documentation of the war.<sup>2</sup>

First of all, it is necessary to make clear that violence has not affected only certain people in an isolated way, but rather has left its imprint on the lives of entire communities and social groups. There is a risk with narratives that privilege individualized histories that privatize and particularize the harm, because the damage cannot be understood without the context in which it was produced. Therefore we do suggest that memory work go beyond those formally acknowledged as victims and consider the totality of the population.

As mentioned in the introduction, some prefer the term “survivor” and avoid the term “victim” when thinking about the impact of violence, given that this term carries a certain stigma and tends to highlight suffering, powerlessness and passivity, ignoring peoples’ capacity to confront violence and their many resources for overcoming what happened.

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<sup>2</sup> This section contains significant contributions by Pau Pérez

Yet being considered a “victim” can be understood as the recognition of a social role as an affected person with fundamental rights, that is, *a victim as a rights-bearing subject*. In this sense, using the term “victim” can be a form of active resistance undertaken in order to avoid impunity and forgetting. It also acknowledges people not only in their suffering but also in their condition as social actors trying to see justice done, reparation offered, and guarantees that violations will not be repeated. In this context, the idea of victim can become the basis for and an engine of change. Naming oneself as “victim” or survivor thus signifies the possibility of recognition and dignity, since what is not named does not exist or is only recognized with difficulty.

Used in this way, the concept of “victim” can become a tool of strength and avoids the use of the term in a way that conveys an identity rooted in the past and passivity. That is why we primarily use the term ‘victim’ in these materials and occasionally the term survivor.

It is also important to understand that there are social groups, such as Indigenous peoples, who see themselves as collective subjects. These groups have been systematically persecuted and made victims of violence for belonging to their group and have struggled to resist the multiple violences to which they have been subjected.

Finally, it is important to consider that there are people who have been victimized, in many cases, for their ideals and community projects. Therefore, it is necessary to combat the social imaginary that sometimes categorizes victims as defeated and passive, erasing all reference to their political projects, struggles and sacrifice. It can also pay particular attention to these actors, their involvement in social projects, and their search for solutions to the problems facing their communities of origin.

In recognizing an individual or a group as victims, it is important to consider and respect ethical protocols, values and ensure full confidentiality of direct testimony. This also calls for the recognition of a diversity of experiences, expectations, and forms of processing the losses and trauma of victims (Sánchez, 2008). Some are direct victims, such as those who have been killed, disappeared, displaced,

robbed, kidnapped, tortured, raped, sexually abused, injured or have suffered the loss of a relative. Others become victims through their role as witnesses to the horrors committed against family, friends and community members.

Only by considering the multitude of ways that the conflict has affected so many people is it possible to look at the different ways in which victims are processing the harm they have suffered, and recognize the many people who are part of this history.

---

***Remember:***

Some people prefer to avoid using the term “victim” because they think that it exalts suffering and passivity.

Victims can be indirect (e.g. from having witnessed the violence) or direct (e.g. losing a family member, experiencing violence firsthand). Some groups prefer to avoid this distinction.

Victims may embrace this identity or they may prefer to call themselves survivors or affected persons.

Victims of violence, be they individuals or groups, are not human beings with isolated experiences. The effects of violence affect the entire community. In many cases people become victims because of their ideals and community.

In the construction of historical memory it is essential to recognize and make public the voices of victims as a strategy for active resistance to impunity and forgetting. In this context, the concept of victims as active agents may become a backbone of change. Here we use the concept of “victim” as a tool for strengthening organizing.

Part of the task of the reconstruction of historical memory is to understand, in a broad sense, all of the effects of the armed conflict, and to see the immense group of people who are part of that history, always ensuring the confidentiality of direct testimony.

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## B 1.7 VICTIMS AS SOCIAL AND POLITICAL AGENTS WITH RIGHTS IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS

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### *Let's reflect:*

What is the future of victims in countries with an ongoing conflict?

Is the status of victim permanent or temporary?

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The status of victim is transitory, and may coexist with other social roles where the victim is or may be the protagonist. This means that a person who suffered harm is a social agent, a political and rights-bearing person who can also be engaged in social processes and the reconstruction of the community. At the same time this recognition needs to be paired with the consideration that in critical situations of mass violence, people who become victims of violence may have also been perpetrators of violence against others, which raises several issues, as mentioned above in section A 3.4. This is true, for example, in the context of the Canadian history of residential schools where Aboriginal children were separated from their parents, and prohibited to speak their languages and maintain their cultures (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012). Student-to-student abuse often happened in the schools, and victims often became abusers in their communities. This is one of the silences that has yet to be fully disclosed and that calls for a thoughtful and sensitive process of memory and healing.

### **Victims or perpetrators? Questions to Consider**

Should perpetrators participate in historical memory work?

Should perpetrators just listen?

Does the participation or listening of perpetrators change the nature of the work?

Is this tied to the reasons why a group is doing memory work?

Should they be pointed out as perpetrators?

If they are both perpetrators and victims, at what point do they take up which role?

Does it matter more how they define themselves, or how others define them?

Mass violence, war, or living under a regime of terror often places ordinary people in critical life and death situations. As they face difficult moral choices some may find themselves sometimes as victims of violence and other times as perpetrators of violence or abuse. In these moments individuals may also be faced with situations in which neighbors, friends, and relatives become acquiescent with repression, are passive agents of violence, or are forcibly recruited or abducted into illegal armies. This calls for the consideration of what Holocaust survivor and author Primo Levi referred to as the *grey zone*, a grey and ambiguous space between victims and perpetrators. It also calls for the acknowledgement of the mixed motives and changing locations in which individuals may find themselves in the midst of repression and violence.

### **A reflection on victimhood from Liberia**

*by Mark Marvey, Naymote, National Youth Movement for Transparent Elections, Liberia*

Defining victimhood can be particularly difficult when dealing with children who were forcefully conscripted into fighting forces against their will, but who themselves can be classified as perpetrators because they caused harm to helpless and unarmed persons. The argument of their innocence and the presumed incomprehensibility of their actions cannot be proffered to absolve them of criminal accountability when they remain engaged in the orchestration of violence after they attained the age of majority (18), thus further blurring the line between victims and perpetrators.

In Liberia for example, some of the child soldiers fighting in Taylor's rag-tag army were as young as nine-years old. But not all were press-ganged into service. Many joined the government militias as volunteers eager to avenge the killing of their parents by rebel fighters, or for survival. Every day, child soldiers could be seen riding around the streets of the capital Monrovia in pick-up trucks proudly toting their automatic rifles, or at the forefront of the fighting. Relief workers in Monrovia testified that on several occasions during the conflict, forces loyal to President Charles Taylor raided schools and camps of displaced people in search of young recruits to fight two rebel movements.

Liberia was wracked by fourteen years of intermittent warfare and chronic government neglect. So with most schools closed and few other job prospects available, picking up an AK-47 rifle and lurching off to the front line in a battered pick-up truck all too easily seem a glamorous prospect. Approximately 5,000 child soldiers participated in the conflicts between 1989 and 1996; but the children's rights group Child Peace Liberia Inc., posited that 20 per cent of all combatants in Liberia's first civil war were under 18-years-old.

The universe of victims is heterogeneous and their ways of addressing the violence or processing losses and damages are varied according to gender, race, age, class or social networks. Some want to speak and others do not. Some need language interpretation to do so, and may or may not have that available. Some want to talk in the first-person and others, out of modesty, fear, or because they do not want to exert pressure through their position as victims, prefer third-person narration. Some may be willing to speak only in private and refuse to testify in a more public manner, while others may opt to go public with their experience.

The same victim, at different times, can tell very different versions of the same events, which can sometimes emphasize certain episodes and at other times minimize them. Memory works through analogy, metaphor,

exaggeration, suppression, and minimization - which should not be evaluated as true or false but as symbolic representations which express the emotional scars that lived experiences have left on the victims.

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***Remember:***

Victims are not defeated and passive subjects, but rather social and political rights-bearing social agents in conflict situations who may be involved in social processes and the reconstruction of the community.

The impact and traces of violence are not only determined by the violent events, but are also shaped by the personal characteristics of victims, such as their age, gender, and networks of support. These factors shape emotions and behaviour and, therefore, personal tendencies to either speak or be silent.

Memories are dynamic and convey victim's plural demands and positions in the political field that cannot be standardized.

Violence has a disarticulating effect that must be overcome by supplementing the fragmented testimony of victims with elements of the global context.

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## **B 1.8 THE RIGHT TO MEMORY AND TO FORGETTING**

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***Let's reflect:***

What do we say? What do we silence?

What do we forget? What do we remember?

What is silence? When do we keep silent?

Is it possible to forget the violent events that have happened to us?

What do we feel when we remember the violence?

---

In the face of lived horrors, many victims isolate specific memories. Others produce psychological or unconscious "blocks" of the traumatic violent events they experienced. Many remember clearly what happened to them, and even come to discuss it with those close to them, but



decide to remain silent in front of strangers because they do not want to remember or to sink back into suffering with a sense of shame or anger.

For these reasons, it is necessary to recognize and respect the fact that some people choose not to speak, thus freely and independently exercising their right to remain silent, an inalienable right in processes of truth telling and/or historical memory reconstruction.

It is also true that in a situation where historical memory is being recovered while war continues, fear is a powerful incentive to keep quiet. Many people fear that they will again suffer physical, verbal, moral, psychological, economic abuse or other types of harm. The perpetrators may have returned to communities where they engaged in hostilities, or continue to threaten victims who seek reparations or name those responsible. In these cases, fear appears not only in the memories of past violent acts, but is often palpably felt in the present. Because of the threats and the presence of armed networks, state institutions have a duty to ensure the safety of victims and address the security demands of those who want to testify in formal or informal ways.

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Memory workers, when working with people who want their voices heard and their versions incorporated into historical accounts, can promote the creation of respectful and safe spaces where they can express their testimonies. They can also aim to recognize the trajectory of many of these persons, as members of organizations that, in the midst of war, have worked to build new alternatives and social structures.

Despite the efforts made to prevent re-victimization when one reconstructs a violent experience, we must recognize that this danger exists and that carrying out concrete exercises of memory recuperation may revive suppressed or unresolved memories and may thus cause suffering in those who remember. For this reason we include here (in [section D](#)) a number of care techniques that seek to support participants and memory workers in appropriate ways.

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**Remember:**

Speaking, remaining silent, and blocking memories are all ways that victims use to deal with their experiences of violent situations.

Remaining silent is an inalienable right of those who have been victims of violence, whether it be to avoid suffering, anger, or shame, or out of fear of further harm by active armed networks.

Historical memory interventions can promote the creation of respectful and safe spaces for people who wish to incorporate their stories into historical accounts.

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▲ Monument to the victims of the massacre of Trujillo, Valle, Colombia. Photo by Jesús A. Colorado, 2008

## B 2. THE SOCIO-CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF MEMORY:

### UNDERSTANDING MEMORY AS OBJECT, SOURCE AND METHOD

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#### *Let's reflect:*

How does the exercise of building historical memory serve society and the community?

What does the memory of victims offer to the history of the country?

How do individuals and communities respond to state-generated histories of the past?

How do they generate their own narratives about the past?

How do communities repair social relationships and networks that violence so often tears apart?

---

What makes memory work different from other historical or social research? In historical memory work, memory is understood as a tool with which individuals and societies construct a sense of the past. Oral sources, narratives, and performances of memory serve at the same time as object (focus of study) and source for the construction of historical narrative (Portelli, 1991). Memory, the dynamic processes and related practices of remembering and forgetting, furthermore, constitutes the core element in the methodological approach proposed in this resource material.

The work of historical memory in this sense goes beyond the reconstruction of the facts as data, or the gathering of testimonies which verify a certain version. It looks to the meanings, i.e., how an event is experienced and remembered, and to the ways in which individuals over time make sense and give value to certain experiences, and the ways that these are preserved and transmitted in social memory. Recall that

(...) meanings are cultural, socially and subjectively constructed, so that what may be significant for one culture may be irrelevant for another. Something which may represent

losses for a man may be considered a gain for a woman, and in any event the valuation and assessment of the facts will reflect the particular experiences of each person (Bello, 2005).

When we remember, consciously or unconsciously, we highlight various facts which leave marks on our lives because they turned out to be significant. Remembering is not passive, nor a purely psychological or natural act, but an act of continuously recreating the past in the present. It is a social and cultural process where remembering and forgetting, practices that are both opposite and complementary, serve as the two operations that continually renew memory (Portelli, 1990; Riaño, 2006).

The narratives, dramatization, objects, and rituals by which memories are shared and transmitted, are therefore a resource that individuals use to recount their experiences. It is also a vehicle through which we build a sense of who we are - our identity - on the basis of our experiences, feelings and reminiscences of the past. Individuals and social groups select and reorganize those rememberings and forgettings that allow them to define themselves as both unique and as members of a group. This task of making sense of the past for the present, and for future aspirations, is a strategy of identity construction.

Memory in this sense is responsible not only for our convictions, but for our feelings (Todorov, 1997). These beliefs and feelings are structured in social frameworks and in relation to the memories of others and, therefore, the individual act of remembering positions the remembered events within the frameworks of collective memory (Halbwachs, 1992). In short, in the ways in which we remember and forget one can trace both marks and signs of identity and the ways in which individuals construct themselves as subjects and members of groups (Riaño, 1999).

But these practices of remembering are necessarily selective. This means that people remember an event differently, enriching the exercise of memory construction. What our memories evoke, what they forget, and what they silence is not merely due to an inability to recall certain aspects or details of experience. Rather it is an active selection process that has

to do with the ways in which the individual or group turns to the past to serve the present. It has to do with the ways in which the past - or the story that is built about past events - informs, explains and reaffirms the person and their actions in the present and under specific circumstances.

Memory, as well as being selective, serves an ordering function. It makes sense of events by inserting them into a narrative. Our narratives are not only descriptive (that November event X happened) but also causal. That imperative to understand the reasons why events happen is expressed most heartbreakingly in the phrase repeated again and again by mothers of the disappeared, who cry out to know where the bodies of their children are and to understand what happened to them. "I want them to tell me why they took him," they say, again and again.

Memory work has been done to make visible silenced memories, to document the memories of certain groups and individuals, and extract the meanings (impacts, marks) of certain events in both their individual and collective dimensions. Making collective sense of the past can potentially reconstruct the social fabric and help to reconstruct a sense of purpose as members of a community, as well as help in reconstructing their own life plans. Recognizing one's own history within the history of others is directly linked to the task of rebuilding trust, and then of re-establishing purpose as members of a community. This process creates a 'we', even if only a temporary one. It creates a temporary community of memory, of shared feelings and emotions. Consensus is not required. Even debates and disagreements can be a useful process of shared negotiation of meaning (Riaño, 2008).

Remembering is not simply the act of evoking an event, but rather of being able to form significant narrative sequences (Connerton, 1989). Remembering, therefore, is not an aspect of reproduction, but rather of construction. This points us to the horizon of the functions of memory in individual and social life, and to the ways in which both remembering and forgetting, the two complementary processes and practices of memory, fulfill certain roles and are used by individuals and societies with and for certain purposes.

The box below illustrates some of these functions by recording the reflections of one group of women in Trujillo in the Valle del Cauca region of Colombia, on what functions remembering and forgetting serve in their lives, and in contexts marked by violence. See Appendix 2 for a description of how to run such a discussion.

The functions of remembering and forgetting listed by these two groups signal a relationship between the ways in which events of political violence and traumatic experiences are registered in individual and collective memory, and their ability to repair, serve a symbolic function, and construct memory.

### The functions and uses of historical memory

*Example of group brainstorming from a memory workshop in Trujillo, Valle, Colombia:*

#### Why do we remember?

- To not forget
- To reconstruct
- To build a memory that others can read but which also help us to work through our sorrows and grief
- One remembers because one never forgets
- One also remembers to rectify, as a form of teaching
- There are things that should not be remembered; remembering is not always about living
- We also stir up the past to make space for justice
- We also remember so as to have a right to reparations
- To not die of grief and pain.



### Why do we forget?

- The violence was like being branded. You can't forget it.
- We have the right to forget. An elaborated forgetting
- There is a difference between silencing and forgetting by choice
- One forgives but does not forget. The memories remain
- We all have a memory that feels recent; violence is a wound that is renewed every day
- The drama that the violence let loose is an open wound. Every time one comes back to it, it bleeds again.

The marks of violence in individual and collective memories are characterized by:

- The presence of fear as a factor that regulates daily life, lays the foundation for silences and distress, and restricts the possibility of giving testimony, narrating suffering, and mourning.
- The fragmentation of individual memories, as some suffering has not been made public and has not been repaired (Uribe, 2006).
- The difficulty of maintaining distance from memories that are anchored in the literal and unilateral reconstruction of a traumatic event and the feelings of being overburdened, helpless and angry (these elements are further developed below).
- The risks of recalling experiences and situations for the purpose of historical clarification in a context in which violence continues and actively threatens the social fabric.

Another aspect to consider in the construction of historical memory of traumatic events is its potential to contribute to the reconstruction of social networks and to facilitate processes of mourning. The exercise of remembering in a group involves a "face to face" look at the events of the past, and the giving of individual testimony of painful and traumatic

experiences. Building this type of memory in a collective process marked by respect may be one of the tools that facilitates making sense of the past in communities that have been affected by violence, and may also facilitate, through such a recounting, a process of mourning the losses.

The following sections explore in greater depth how these memory construction activities can open doors to a creative process of making sense and meaning of painful events and recognizing their impact on individuals and groups, in particular the feelings and emotions that are repressed (pain, anger, despair, helplessness) and the mechanisms by which they are internalized and can be faced. Likewise, the risks and implications of these processes are explored.

In this section we have considered memory as both a tool of social identity and a source and method for constructing history. In considering memory as a source for historical reconstructions, the meaning that people give to the past is considered an element of the work of history making and truth telling.

The work of historical memory draws on various sources. It has been used to refer to the rigorous reconstruction of data, facts, and their chronologies, through the use of sources such as archives, judicial files, media, oral testimonies, group and individual interviews with eyewitnesses to the events. It also seeks the rigorous reconstruction of memories, how events are remembered, imagined and symbolized with their footprints, marks and fractures, the multiple versions that exist about them, and the reasons for these contradictory tellings or differences in remembering (Uribe, 2005).

These memories will in some cases have the credibility of a deed (i.e., they corroborate the data obtained through other sources), and in other cases will not. The important thing is that both the memories that support the data, as well as the “false” or unsupported ones, are “true” from a psychological and cultural perspective because they speak of the way the event was experienced by the person or how it is interpreted, or even manipulated (Portelli, 1991; Vansina, 1985). In this sense memory



and history are complementary, both for the construction of a historical document as well as for historical clarification.

---

**Remember:**

The work of reconstructing historical memory is at once object, source and method for the construction of historical narratives.

*Object* because it seeks to develop a narrative that accounts for the reasons that made possible the emergence and evolution of the conflict or violence, and to give space to the voices of the victims in the historical record.

*Source* because memory becomes the central axis of the historical narrative.

*Method* because the work of historical memory can seek both the rigorous reconstruction of the facts as well as the rigorous reconstruction of memories.

To work in memory reconstruction processes it can be helpful to keep in mind that memory is:

*Selective*, so memory work can go beyond simply studying or recovering the content of memories, but also look at the process and ways by which individuals and groups construct and incorporate these memories, retain certain memories, and organize their individual and collective experience.

*Organizing*, when we remember we aim to highlight certain events and give them meaning and a *raison d'être*.

*Dynamic*, it is continually renewed through the practices of remembering and forgetting.

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### B 3. THE PSYCHOSOCIAL DIMENSION OF MEMORY

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*To remember is to go back by way of our feelings, by way of the heart (...)*

To remember is to feel again.

- Ignacio Fernández Mata , 2006

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Historical memory reconstruction projects can have a major impact on the psychosocial wellbeing of the people involved in them. These impacts

can be positive, but these projects may also give rise to situations and conflicts which, if not properly cared for, can lead to the deepening of feelings and relationships that are harmful for victims.

It is important to understand that these processes touch on experiences that are generally very painful and which require memory workers to understand the emotional world that is involved, and to have the skills that allow them to work with pain, fear, silence, anger and other feelings that flow from passing traumatic experiences back through words and feelings.

First let us identify the psychosocial value of memory and its contribution to the processes of mourning and to the reconstruction of fragmented families and communities.



▲ Historical Memory Workshop in the Apurimac region of Perú. Photo by Redinfa

### B 3.1 THE RECONSTRUCTION OF MEMORY AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO PSYCHOSOCIAL WELLBEING

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#### *Let's reflect:*

Why does it serve people who have been victims of violence to participate in historical memory processes?

What possibilities do historical memory spaces offer to those who want to share their life stories?

What are the advantages for victims in reconstructing and sharing their memories?

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Acts of political violence are intentional events caused by other people who pursue specific interests, and are usually sudden extremely painful and frightening events. Most often, these are events which are difficult to attribute any meaning to (i.e., to understand why they happened), and which have the ability to strip the victims of their capacity to control their lives. Most of the time there are very few guarantees for victims to know what exactly happened (who was responsible, how it happened, where their relatives are, etc.). Given the impunity and power of the perpetrators, it is their reasons and justifications that are made public and used to explain what happened.

The lack of respect, the absence of answers that explain why a particular tragedy happened to the person, along with the perpetrators' statements of justification ("we killed them because they were guerrillas", "she was the girlfriend of a paramilitary") generate in victims deep feelings of guilt, humiliation, and shame that cause great suffering, and lead to feelings of revenge, despair and a great deterioration of self-esteem. In fact, many families regret not having done things that in their opinion would have prevented what happened. The stories of sexually abused women reveal how many recriminate themselves for their behaviours, bearing the burden of guilt that should fall on the perpetrators.

This is why reconstructing the history of the events and allowing different voices to describe and explain what happened is such a valuable resource that can help to identify responsibilities for the

facts: *who did what, how, and why*. Identifying those responsible not only contributes to understanding what happened and denounces and prevents violence - it also helps decrease or eliminate possible feelings of guilt. Knowing the reasons why something happened can help to give a certain meaning to it. It can help victims to understand that what happened was not due to chance or bad luck. Above all it offers clarity that the fault lies not in the actions or omissions of victims ('if I had said', 'if I had gone', 'if I had accompanied him', etc.), but rests with the perpetrators.

Reconstructing the history makes it possible to specify the damages and losses that violent acts produce. It also provides an opportunity to identify situations and changes that were triggered by human losses as well as the loss of valuable and significant property. In specifying the losses it is also possible to talk about feelings that were experienced and still persist (sadness, anger, discouragement, irritation), as well as identify possibilities for carrying out actions that may have been left undone (paying tribute to the victims, expressing solidarity to someone, etc.).

Reconstructing the history also allows for the recuperation of the biographies of the dead and the rescue of their dignity (often affected by the discourses of the perpetrators who dishonour the good name of the dead to justify their actions). Restoring the dignity of victims has a profound healing effect because, on the one hand, it helps the family to seek and demand justice with greater security, and on the other, it can allow for some easing of their sense of owing a debt to their family members, and even to themselves.

To talk about what happened, when victims want or feel the need to do so, helps to raise awareness that they are subjects made vulnerable by the actions of others. This awareness is essential for generating feelings of outrage (this should not have happened!) and for motivating actions which seek justice on the basis of knowing themselves to be individuals with rights, and not as people seeking the goodwill or charity of others.

To remember and to listen to different versions that contribute to expanding and completing the historical narrative also helps victims to know that there are other people who experience similar situations. It allows therefore for understanding that the responses that a violation of human rights provokes (such as anger, insomnia, hopelessness, discouragement, the consumption of alcohol or psychoactive drugs, the loss of or drastic change in beliefs) do not have to do with personality problems of the victim (being weak, spiteful, intolerant), but instead are usually normal reactions to events that should not happen to any human being. The deep personal, family and community crises triggered by violence are in fact impacts of, and defence mechanisms deployed to try to deal with, facts and experiences that are not normal.

Recognizing a common foundation of emotions and experiences changes the way individuals see, give new meaning to their experience, establishes new connections between past and present, and allows them to position themselves as surviving witnesses. It allows them to situate their own history within a broader frame of collective suffering and build a different relationship to the past.

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Talking about what happened and the feelings it provokes, in particular cultural contexts and for some people, can relieve the heavy burden that silence implies. The truth is that it is hard to forget violent events, and although many people who opt for silence try to forget them, what actually happens is that the memory bursts through like a nightmare, as indescribable and unspeakable distress, as a symptom in the body. Many experience that the exercise of narrating painful events can produce true relief. Indeed, some experts say that forgetting will be possible only once the event has been remembered.

(...) to forget painful experiences often requires first being able to remember and accept it in one's current life. Only after owning these experiences can they be the object of healthy forgetting. For it is the case that what has been rejected and excluded from life experience has remained submerged and silenced, but continues to live and create pressure through symptoms. (Gómez and Castillo, 2005)

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**Remember:**

Memory reconstruction processes are exercises that help both society and the victims. They help society to undertake searches for justice, and thereby contribute to the changes that are required for reconstructing and democratizing the social order(s).

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For the victims themselves these exercises can be of great emotional and spiritual value. They represent an exercise of elaboration, understanding, socialization and validation of their experience that helps to free them from the harmful effects produced by feelings of guilt. They allow them to freely express to others who will listen respectfully and potentially share their own pain. Exercises of memory work may help them to understand their feelings and emotions. They allow them to recognize support resources and to identify their own abilities and attributes. They help them not to feel so alone and to dignify their demands for justice.

The main contributions of the reconstruction of historical memory to psychosocial wellbeing are:

- Identification of those responsible for the events.
- Specification of the damage and loss of human life and of valuable and significant property.
- Retrieval of the biographies of those killed or missing, rescuing their dignity.
- Generation of awareness that victims are rights-bearing subjects whose rights have been violated by the actions of others.
- Exchange with people who have had similar experiences and the understanding that the responses provoked by a violation of human rights are generally normal reactions to events that should not happen to any human being.

- Relief of the burden of silence, contributing to the unfolding of processes of mourning and forgetting.

### B 3.2 RISKS OF REMEMBERING AND TALKING ABOUT THE PAIN

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#### ***Let's Reflect:***

Why might some victims choose not to speak about the events they experienced?

What are the risks faced by victims as they reconstruct and share their memories?

What reactions could be generated by the reconstruction of historical memory in the groups involved in this work?

What about in communities outside of the process of historical memory reconstruction?

What about in political organizations? What about in armed groups?

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So far we have emphasized the value of the processes of memory reconstruction for the psychosocial well-being of victims. However, we caution that these processes also involve risks and negative impacts, particularly in contexts where armed conflict persists. These should be considered so as to establish the means and resources to prevent and deal with them.

*Risks of secondary victimization.* Some social and institutional responses can contribute to people reliving their situation as victims and strip them of their abilities to deal with the situations caused by the violence. Their identities can then remain anchored and reduced to their violent experience, highlighting only their features as hurt and suffering persons. To remember and publicly express painful and traumatic events involves a high risk of secondary victimization whenever people relive situations that put them in a state of extreme vulnerability and helplessness. This can lead to what Portocarrero has called a 'wounded memory', that is to say, a prison of melancholy where, immersed in our own pain, we cannot see others. It is a memory that does not permit us

to face our hates and tears. In it we actually remain engrossed in grief without end, in an eternal repetition of the pain (Portocarrero, 2004).

*Producing victimizing narratives.* It is important to prevent narratives that emphasize disempowered victimized and suffering identities. Instead the narratives produced may highlight mechanisms of survival and coping, the resources and efforts of individuals and the multiple ways, open and subtle or even hidden, in which they respond to and resist violence. This also may strengthen victims' capacity for agency.

*Risks of reincidenting or exacerbating family or community conflicts.* It is known that actions of violence may divide communities, sow mistrust among people and cause shame and silence. As such it is necessary to anticipate that after violent and painful events family and community conflicts will appear or get worse, and that these may be expressed in the spaces where collective memory is being reconstructed. Often contradictory and even conflicting versions are presented, and these must be anticipated and faced.

In the face of these risks it is necessary to state firmly and clearly that the "guilt" of the violent acts lies always with the perpetrators, and that it is they who should be held responsible. Similarly, it can be made clear that violent actions are also purposefully enacted so as to divide, fragment and tear apart. This clarity is not at odds with the possibility that communities critically review their past and present, but it does make it possible to deactivate the self-censorship and guilt mentioned above.

*Risks of revictimization.* In the context of impunity and the persistence of armed conflict, the exercises for reconstruction of memory often lead to processes of reporting or demanding justice. These actions may again put victims at risk of harm by those implicated as responsible. People should understand these risks and those organizations that accompany them should foster actions for their psychological and physical protection.



*Risks of social stigmatization and isolation.* In a context of high social polarization, powerful political, military and social sectors may demand silence and forgetting. As such, exercises for the reconstruction of memory and history are sometimes classified and condemned as impediments to peace, and are vilified as spiteful and vindictive actions. This can lead to victims being singled out and delegitimized.

In this sense it is important to consider actions that strengthen victims, both individually and collectively. Victims should be recognized for the value of their testimony to society and their contribution to overcoming impunity and to the construction of a more inclusive and equitable society. This recognition should be explicit and public.

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**Remember:**

The processes of reconstruction of collective memory also involve risks and negative impacts, particularly in contexts where armed conflict persists, that should be anticipated so as to establish the means and resources to prevent and deal with them. These risks include:

- Secondary victimization: reliving the role of victims and becoming stuck in an eternal repetition of pain.
- The aggravation of family or community conflicts.
- Revictimization: those who participate in complaint processes or demand justice may again become victims of the armed actors.
- Stigmatization and social isolation by political, military and social sectors that demand silence and forgetting.

Section D provides specific tools to address these risks and considers the psychosocial dimensions of memory work.

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**Kachkanirraqkum allin wiñay Q'espichinaykupaq: "In spite of everything, we are still here to construct a better future" - Methodological proposal for the elaboration of historical memory in rural communities**

*By Rosa Lía Chauca, Network for Children and Families of Peru (Redinfa, Red para la Infancia y la Familia - Peru)*

The Final Report of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2003), systematized nearly 17,000 testimonies that allowed them to estimate that 69,280 people died during the internal armed conflict. The Commission found that *campesinos* (small farmer and farmworkers) were the main victims of the violence, that 79 per cent of victims lived in rural areas, and 75 percent of those killed spoke Quechua or another indigenous language as their first language. In contrast, only 16 percent of the Peruvian population falls into this category, according to the national census of 1993. In the three most affected departments the proportion of people who spoke Quechua or another indigenous language is even greater amongst the deaths reported to the TRC. It also found that approximately 440 rural communities were destroyed.

In this experience we, in the Network for Children and Families of Peru, worked with the support of two local institutions, the Association for Family Development of Apurímena (ADIFA, Asociación para el Desarrollo de la Familia Apurimeña) and the Center for Human Development (CHD, Centro para el Desarrollo Humano) in four communities of the Apurímac Region in the southern part of the country that were deeply affected by the internal armed conflict.

The acts of political violence experienced by these communities left painful marks of destruction and death on individuals and communities. For that reason we nurtured spaces of individual emotional recovery and social reconstruction through memory work. This was a delicate task which required a relatively long time. We established bonds of trust with the communities, based on mutual respect, and valuing the customs, everyday life and culture of this social group. Our mission was to little by little reconstruct the confidence and the spaces of dialogue that were broken by the violence and the constant forgetting.

In this memory work we initiated the recovery and valuation of their knowledge, customs, and the wisdom of their culture that, for reasons of violence, victimization, and vulnerability had been forgotten. Our team had mixed ages and genders, which allowed us to respond to situations where it was necessary to discriminate in a positive way, such as when we worked with a group of women who shared their experiences of sexual violence. Speaking indigenous languages and respecting and following the ways of life and customs of the community were important in this process.

*Emotional support and accompaniment* - During the process of elaborating historical memory we nurtured spaces where people could express their experiences and feelings, seeking to take them out of the private sphere so that they could share their experience and thus contribute to psycho-social recovery. In this process the reflections that were made allowed for understanding what happened in the context of the social and political origins of the violence.

It was important to be prepared to support the people we worked with. As facilitators we did not force expressions of pain, they came out of the groups' own processes, and from each person who expressed themselves when they felt the need to do so. At that moment, we received their expressions of pain, and then gave back to the person and the group a reflection, always linking it to an action (in the past, in the present, and the future).

*Self-care* - Throughout this process the facilitators were also impacted by the pain expressed, which connected us to our own experiences, and in many cases with feelings of helplessness and frustration. For that reason, we also had spaces for emotional support. In these spaces each member of the team reflected regarding their position in the face of the political violence and their social and political reading of the process as they experienced it. This allowed us to focus our intervention on going beyond charity and the victimization of the population.

## Stages of the intervention:

We proposed five phases for the intervention, which were not rigid, since one phase often feeds back to another and there are times when you have to return to the previous one to strengthen the advances that have been achieved.

*Diagnostic* - get to know the community, issues, and resources; understand the internal and organizational dynamics, and redesign the following phases.

*Compiling the stories* - where we seek to support the community to build its history through the memory of different groups in the community, which were defined with the members of the Coordination Committee which was appointed in each community to accompany the process. The groups formed were: elderly, young adults, adults, groups of returnees (people who were displaced and then returned to the community when the conditions of safety improved), and resistant people (people who remained in the community to face the conflict there). Each of them has their own view and interpretation of history. Information-gathering workshops were held with each of these groups.

*Systematization* - when the story collecting workshops were done, the Network's team organized the information from these, based on the criteria established by the community groups. For this phase a systematization card that was used in the Recovery of Historical Memory project (REHMI by its acronym in Spanish) in Guatemala was very useful for us.

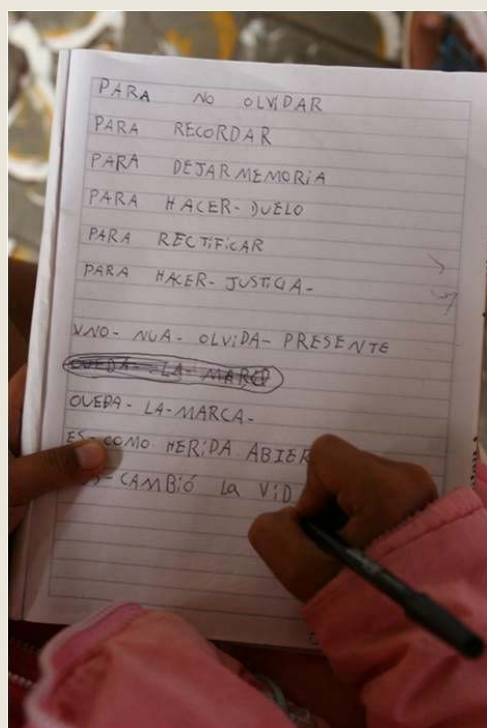
*Return* - The systematized stories were organized to "return" them to the different groups of the communities in workshops, so that different groups could analyse if what they expressed was there, and if it was the story that they had wanted to build. We also held community assemblies where we collected their appreciations and opinions.

*Articulation of memory with the process of local development* - This was an important stage for analyzing and collecting what the communities had learned through this process and the responsibilities they assume regarding their history, development plans, and future life projects.

# Chapter C

## C

### THE METHODOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF MEMORY WORK: WAYS TO ELICIT MEMORY



This section introduces a methodological framework and a set of methods to work with narratives and storytelling to reconstruct historical memory. The *methods* outlined share a common characteristic in that they allow for the exploration of the ways in which people elaborate, construct, change and interpret the events they experienced. That is to say, how people give meaning to the past, and how their individual memories are intertwined with collective or group memories.

A first key aspect in the construction of historical memory is the articulation of questions to guide the exploration of the past, the violent events and their impacts. These questions seek to not only ensure that facts, events and testimonies of what happened are fully documented but also to ensure that the way they were experienced and interpreted by those who lived them are included.<sup>3</sup>

These questions can be grouped into four areas:

- *Reconstruction of the past*: identifying what, how and why specific events happened and how they were experienced.
- *Assessing the impact of the war*: reconstructing the context and situation of the community at the time of the events, the changes and damages resulting from the violent events and their impact on people's lives and the community as a whole.
- *The present of the past and of the future*: identifying who should be remembered, how, and why (to dignify, set the record straight, etc.).
- *Perspectives on the future*: how is the future seen by those affected by the violence, and what action can be taken to achieve a sense of justice.

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<sup>3</sup> These questions are designed based on the guiding questions for collection of data and testimonies for the work of the Colombian Historical Memory Commission, the Guatemala: Never Again - Project for Reconstruction of Historical Memory (1996), and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Peru.

**Reconstruction of the past:** What happened? How did it happen? Where did it happen? Why did it happen? How was it experienced? Who were they? Why did they do it? Why did it happen here and not somewhere else? Why right then?

**Assessing the impact of the war:** What was happening in the community or region at that time? What and who was changed by what happened? What personal, family and community losses did it cause? What significant economic, cultural, emotional and spiritual damages did it generate? How was what happened dealt with? What was the response when the violent events happened? In what ways were they resisted?

**The present of the past and of the future:** What and who do we remember? How should we remember them and preserve their legacy as men and women, family, friends, members of the community?

**Perspectives on the future:** Who are we after what happened? What makes it difficult to live together today? What actions can be taken to restore the rights that were violated? What should be done to prevent this from happening again? What are your demands? What are your hopes for the future?

The methods outlined below can be used in memory workshops (see description below) to facilitate the construction of historical memory, but can also be used outside of a workshop context as part of the work of researchers and memory workers.<sup>4</sup>

Given that war tends to fracture whole communities, sow distrust among neighbours, and close off public social and meeting spaces, memory work may seek to be a place where, not only are the individual marks of suffering reconstructed collectively, but so too are the contexts and the logic of the perpetrators that triggered these emblematic events.

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<sup>4</sup> The presentation of these methods and content, as well as the memory workshops, has been structured by the goals and type of work developed by the Colombian Historical Memory Group, and builds on the previous work and design of the memory workshops that Pilar Riaño has been developing since 1997, which are outlined in several of her publications (Riaño, 2008, 2006a; 2006b and 1999).

Since our narratives about the past describe events and also offer explanations of them, we suggest that memory workers complement the narratives of community participants with information from other sources, such as interviews with regional political and social leaders, ex-combatants and, to the extent possible, a review of personal and institutional archives, newspapers, and other existing databases.

Historical memory work may provide interpretative frames on the dynamics of regional and national wars that are the product of the review of various sources - from those developed by the community itself to the consultation of archives - so that the individual experiences expressed during the workshops can be understood and placed, through these exercises, into local, regional and national historical contexts.

The memory workshop methods use the tools of oral history, memory work, and the verbal-visual arts for the documentation of individual and social memories of certain historical periods. While the methods for recovering historical memory begin with tracing the ways in which memory is symbolized in the local context, its application in a workshop and/or in a group dynamic seeks to activate a group process of historical memory construction that will dignify the memory of the victims and render visible voices from affected groups.

A central feature of these methodologies, with the exception of the individual interview, is that they document both episodic<sup>5</sup> memories of individuals about these events or periods, as well as the various shared narratives, senses and experiences and some of the multiple versions that form the social memory.

This combination allows for an exploration of the ways in which the processes of violence, terror and resistance cross from the public sphere to the realm of individual experience, to be inscribed or registered in individual and communal bodies under certain practices of remembering

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5 Memory that recalls specific events in the life of a person or group, in contrast to those that reconstruct autobiographical sequences, and the ways in which subjects are constructed within specific relationships and events.



and forgetting. At the same time it allows for an exploration of the ways in which these enter into certain collective records of what happened - some hidden and silenced, others public.

The other central element of these methods is that they evoke individual memories in a group context. In this sense the construction of memory includes both a narrative dimension, communicating the memory of an event or series of events through a narrative that organizes and reconstructs the past (Ricoeur, 2004), as well as a dramatic-performative dimension. In telling the story to others there is a performance, which includes gestures, pauses, accents, and the use of the body. Attention to these elements will provide memory workers with a better understanding of what individuals are seeking to communicate and the affective and embodied dimension of their testimony.

According to the sociologist Paul Connerton (1989), groups and societies remember in three ways:

- Through inscriptions in cultural texts (myths, monuments, sacred books)
- Through commemorative rituals
- By incorporating social memory in the human body.

In addition to these traditional modes of inscribing social memory in the environment and in the body, in contemporary society individuals and groups remember through inscription in visual and dramatic media such as video, photography, or television.

When we recognize the *material, symbolic, dramatic, temporal and embodied dimensions of memory*, each of the methods described below allows for the exploration of some of the ways memory is constructed from a specific axis. The following sections illustrate how to work with these dimensions and axes using different methods of reconstruction of historical memory. In the workshops and interviews these methodologies are used to respond to each of the four areas introduced

above (reconstruction of the past, assessment of the impact of war, the present of the past and the future, and perspectives on the future).

Different methods will be more appropriate depending on the questions that are being asked. Another issue to consider when choosing methods is if you want to foster remembering beyond words. Games, theatre, dance, drawing, collage, quilts, photos, video, memoryscapes and other verbal, visual and performative methods can help to build connection with one's self and others, as well as build trust and safety. Creative techniques can be more accessible to the less literate and can allow for sharing stories in non-linear ways and for sharing them more widely. They can also serve to share things that cannot be easily (or safely) expressed in words. Theatre and drama, for example, have been used in Burundi as preparation for more formal [institutional] scenarios of storytelling.

## **C 1. THE GENERATIVE QUESTION(S)**

Each memory activity begins with the asking of a question that activates individual and group memory. The content of this question requires careful attention during the preparation phase, as it will trigger certain memories and certain details depending on how it is asked.

Thus if the question is an open-ended, such as “and what happened here?”, it will lead to a broader narrative and a more comprehensive account of a series of events from the perspective of the narrators, in contrast to a question that asks each participant to evoke personal experiences during a period or about a particular event.

The common characteristic of the type of initial questions that may be asked to activate memories is that they are open-ended and intended to recall past experiences (they are not evaluative in their formulation).

The other crucial element of the “effectiveness” of a question is that it manages to “hook” participants, and in the case of a memory activity this has to do with establishing a bridge that activates personal

memory, the remembering of a certain type of life experiences, and the construction of a story about them.

In considering an inclusive construction of plural memories, pay special attention to differences in ways of telling, remembering, and what is remembered, according to gender, sexuality, generation, ethnicity, race, caste, class, physical ability, language, religion and region, to ask: Who does and says what in these narratives?

## **C 2. PLACE BASED WAYS TO ELICIT MEMORY**

Mapping using mental maps, environmental maps, or walking maps (each described below) is a method used to evoke and record the memories of a group that takes into account the close relationship that exists between people, their environment, and memory.

In particular, mapping as a method to construct historical memory explores the ways in which individual and local memories are anchored in places (that are reminiscent of death, destruction, resistance and membership), and how places are at once made of memories. That is to say, memory also has a cartography, and people are able to evoke the changes and marks of the past through a spatial mapping of the environment and their memories.

Through the construction of maps participants can also explore the marks that violence and armed confrontation have left in the physical environment (destruction, damage to the environment, mine fields, mass graves, and places of terror), and the ways that such violences have transformed their relationship with and perception of the physical environment (the neighbourhood, village, landscape, and natural landmarks).

The construction of maps facilitates the narration of the ways in which violence leaves its mark on the individual and on the lived environment, and also allows for the visualization and the localization of its impact, and the changes it produces. That is to say, it provides a method by which participants can construct maps of memory landmarks.



- ▲ Map on the traces of violence in the town of Trujillo and its surroundings. Elaborated by a group of women from Trujillo, Valle, Colombia in a memory workshop. 2009. Photo by Jesús A. Colorado

## Memory and place

Places are physical, social and sensory arenas for our actions, but likewise for our memories and imaginations. Our experience of the physical environment is based on our sense of space, i.e. the way human beings invest certain parts of our environment with meaning, and how places acquire a symbolic, sacred and historic significance for those who build this relationship, as individuals and as a community.

The analysis of places in memory work acknowledges the ability of places and landmarks (the tree, the monument, the corner, the river), to unleash individual and collective memories and connect an individual's olfactory, tactile and visual senses and their emotions with a sense of local history and its marks of identity. These perceptions and experiences of the physical environment are marked in our bodies as place memories.

Through the development of maps one can identify and track a variety of processes, memories and events, such as:

- Traces of violence in the environment, the places marked by violence: where certain emblematic violent events happened (see photo: map of Trujillo and box “Memoryscapes”)
- Places around which historical memory turns: emblematic and mythic landmarks, those which are part of the local oral history, the uses and associations of certain places by certain groups (e.g. street corners for urban youth) and the changes in these places.



▲ Route of mass displacement followed by residents of the Barrio el Salado, Comuna 13, Medellín. Map elaborated by women of the barrio, 2010.

- The territorialities of the violence: armed checkpoints, presence of armed groups, travel or supply routes, and routes of displacement.
- The geography of suffering and its traces in the environment: the places where memory survives, places of commemoration, those which evoke certain people, as well as differences in the memory of the place according to group (gender, age, ethnicity, race, caste, class, sexuality, language, religion).
- Local initiatives of resistance and their marks in the environment: the routes of marches, the places that are recovered or reclaimed from armed actors for the civilian population, those places where memories are fought over or disputed.
- Sacred sites and cultural landmarks: from churches to graveyards to traditional prayer sites.



▲ Historical traces and cultural landmarks in Bahía Portete. Map elaborated by a group of Wayuu Women in Guajira, Colombia. 2009. Photo by Pilar Riaño

- Natural resources: such as minerals, oil, and lumber. Mapping these can be a way to trace the connections between resources and violence.
- Land tenure: changes in land tenure and use, its expropriation, and displacements can also be mapped.

## C 2.1 MENTAL MAPS

The mental map captures images, symbols and landmarks of memory that individuals have of their environment, their perceptions, spatial location, and sensory reaction to the environment. The group identifies a landmark (e.g. the river, the plaza, a statue) that everyone in the group recognizes and which everyone can use to orient themselves. This landmark is taken as a reference point for drawing a mental map that traces individual and group memory marks on the basis of the question asked. A mental map can begin with a blank piece of paper, or can be done on inside a previously mapped outline of an area.

For example, in a workshop on the Caribbean coast of Colombia we asked: What are the significant marks in the region that reflect your memories of violence and suffering? Starting with this question and the identification of a landmark (for example a river or a monument), the group decides what to draw, what to include, and how. The marking of these places on the map and the histories that are then told by each individual, paint a mental map of the region, a picture of how individuals see the space. This is then further developed in narratives about specified periods or topics (e.g. land).

For more detailed description of how to run a mental maps activity see Appendix 3.

## C 2.2 MAPS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The group can also work from a previously prepared conventional outline map of the region or place, and on this map they can trace marks and routes of the violence, and places that are key to memory (sites with a story for telling, that are referred to in stories, or are places of resistance). One can also create maps that illustrate historical changes

and transformations of space (such as maps of the place “before” and “after” the violence).

These maps can be used to start discussion in smaller circles, but can also be put on the wall at large events for many people to write on and share in this way.



▲ Children in a rural Guatemalan community, identifying the massacres committed during the internal armed conflict, photo courtesy of Brenda Pineda

### C 2.3 WALKING ROUTE MAPS - WALKABOUTS

Walking maps, like mind maps, identify locations (points, landmarks in the physical and natural environment) that are significant in the memories of individuals over a specific period or set of events.

The particularity of this method is that the recognition of these places and the construction of these memories is done “while moving”, as the group takes a journey and goes to the places identified by group members as important, while sharing memories and stories.

For these walks one aims to have participants plan a tour of significant places and routes of their experience and for the case in question, of places that are emblematic of their experiences of violence and suffering.





▲ Walkabout during a memory workshop. Monument to the victims of the massacre of Trujillo, Valle, Colombia. 2008. Photo by Jesús A. Colorado

During the tour at each site, the stories of what happened and how it was lived are shared and can be documented both visually –with a map and photos or video – and orally, that is through recording the stories told in each location. These tours also make it possible to reconstruct information about context (what happened, when, where), actors (who was where, who did what, where) and resistances (who did what, where).

For more a more detailed description of how to do this, see Appendix 4.

## C 2.4 INVENTORY OF THE MEMORYSCAPE

Memory practitioner Aaron Weah from Liberia and Louis Bickford (International Center for Transitional Justice, ICTJ) developed this conceptualization of memoryscapes<sup>6</sup> and the inventory of memoryscapes

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<sup>6</sup> In April 2008, sites of massacres, mass grave and other sites of conscience were inventoried in Monrovia and surrounding districts. The concept of memoryscape was introduced by Louis Bickford and applied and tested by Aaron Weah. In its original design, the function of the memoryscape was divided into the three categories defined above. However, application of the concept over the past four years (including the over 150 massacres and mass grave sites documented in the Liberia Truth and Reconciliation Report, TRC Report) have shifted from what was initially understood as memory as fixed into the three categories

activity. The term *memoryscape* captures the “universe” of memory as inscribed in the landscape. This universe is comprised of places, street names, sites of massacres, mass graves, symbols and foundational legends (Weah, 2010). Both the visible and invisible markers tell a story about what happened or provide an historical interpretation (or context) to some of the root causes to the violence and/or war. Weaved together they capture the public imagination of what happened, and help to reveal the source of peoples’ pain, agitation, and desire for accountability.

The inventory of *memoryscapes* helps to understand how a social group wants to remember the past and how they “feel” about such a past. It is also helpful in pointing to what the majority of the people remember and to discover silenced or forgotten memories and events. It also helps to determine issues that people are less interested in remembering. This approach enabled the Liberian group that used it to discern “transitioning” in memory processes. That is, issues of less significance today were felt strongly in the past but have been de-emphasized now as a result of renewed conflict.

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above to transitional memory. It is transitional in the sense that so long as a context remains locked in the vortex of renewed hostility, new markers and sites of atrocities will emerge and compete for public space. Accordingly, markers or sites of massacres may shift from points of higher intensity to low intensity. In other words, such shifts could alter the *memoryscape* in ways that make markers change from visible to invisible or invisible to visible. In other words, the *memoryscape* can function as a barometer of how the past is being remembered, or suggest positive and inclusive ways for post-conflict societies to remember the past.



▲ Former rebel checkpoint “God Bless You Gate” in Monrovia, Liberia.  
Photo by Louis Bickford, 2008

The notorious rebel checkpoint of the God Bless You Gate was located on the Eastern outskirts of Monrovia. In mid 1990 rebel fighters used this checkpoint to check ethnic identity. Those ‘guilty’ of belonging to a rival ethnic group were tortured and summarily executed at this place. In postwar Liberia, God Bless You Gate is invisible as there is no physical marker indicating the atrocities that occurred here, but very visible to those who endured torture and near death.

Memoryscape identification can be done using any of the three mapping techniques described above or simply by brainstorming a list of:

1. *Visible places of memory that are invisible:* these are street names or places (including monuments or memorials) that no one cares about or notices;
2. *Invisible places of memory that are visible:* Unlike the above-mentioned category, these are places that are unmarked, yet everyone knows what they are and what they mean. For example, Old open spaces previously used as military check points where many of the killings took place.
3. *Visible places of memory that are visible:* this was the main purpose of the inventory exercise as done in Liberia. Examples include: names of stadiums, major streets, national symbols (including National Seal and foundational legends), and sites of massacres, especially those that people notice and have strong feelings about.



This monument is a commemorative marker by the Samay Community, located in central Liberia. On October 1994, the community lost 37 of its residents in a horrific massacre. In 2001, a few years after the election of President Charles Taylor, the community decided to commemorate the events of October 1994. Two reasons led to this decision. First, those massacred were repeatedly appearing in the dreams of the town people, making appeals not to be forgotten. In one of the dreams, it was indicated that the town would win no further football matches (a local passion) if the massacre was forgotten. Second, the town believed that future generations needed a way to learn from the horrors of the civil war so that they would be less inclined to repeat them.



▲ Monument to victims of massacre, Samay, Liberia. Photo taken by Aaron Weah, 2008.

### C 3. TIME BASED WAYS TO ELICIT MEMORY

The specificity of these methods is that they evoke narratives and chronologies that organize the tellings of the experiences of individuals and groups within a particular understanding of time and sequence. These methods identify what events mark a before and an after in the lives of individuals and communities. These events break the temporality of the war or mass violence into discrete events and shape the reconstruction of the past and the continuities that are established between events.

Timelines and visual biographies are done in groups that share a certain history or common characteristics in order to identify a sequence of events that mark their lives and the social biography of a specific place (e.g., a town), or a specific period (e.g., the upsurge of violence) from the point of view of participants.

#### C 3.1 TIMELINES

A timeline introduces a sequence of events and marks of the past that are constructed according to the lived experiences and sense of history

of a group of people.<sup>7</sup> These are placed on a time line that is drawn on a surface (i.e. a large sheet of paper or a chalkboard) and represented generally by tracing a line on which events are then sequentially placed. They can also be done in different non-linear forms. Making a timeline involves the selection, within a continuum of events, of some key events which take place at specific times and places, and then their placement in a temporal chronology. The selection criteria are determined by the individual or the group, and take into consideration both significant events in the individual's lived experiences as well as those that mark and make an impression on their group or community or region.



▲ Timeline of milestones of violence and resistance to war in the Middle Atrato Region, Chocó, Colombia. 2009. Photo by Camila Orjuela

<sup>7</sup> These methods are reviewed in Slim and Thompson (1993).

### The event in memory

The event is a unit of time and a reference point from which memories are organized and structured. The stories of individuals and collectives about the past are built around certain key events. According to the Italian historian Alessandro Portelli (1991:21), an event serves ... “to break down continuous time into a sequence of discrete events, grouped into periods around certain key facts (“before the war”, “after I was married”... ).”

The analysis of events, notes Portelli, makes it easier to identify how the memory of specific periods is organized along certain temporal chronologies, but also the “modes” (cues) in which each narrator tells and gives coherence to their stories.

Portelli refers to three narrative patterns which the narrator may use to organize their narratives and select the dominant mode for organizing their recollection: the sphere of politics, community life, and personal experience. Women, for example, may censor their own memories of violent events that happen to them in private space.

You can begin making a timeline by asking each participant to name significant events in a particular region during a specific period. Significant events include dynamics and acts of violence, as well as community resistance and organizing. The timelines, the events and their stories, are shared. The group then builds a broader network of events (the larger conjuncture) which the individual events are a part of. For this exercise of locating larger events the group must decide on both a beginning and an end date. These dates are significant in that they speak to the group’s perceptions of the dynamics of violence and resistance. The analysis of the group can point to both the key dynamics of each period as well as the conjunctures which they consider critical and which have influenced the course of local events.

For a more detailed description of how to do this activity see Appendix 5.

### C 3.2 VISUAL BIOGRAPHIES

A visual biography is a way to facilitate tracking what events, chronological sequences and stories are present in the memory of individuals using a narrative and graphic tool to express them in a visual manner.

A biography reconstructs the “life” of a period in the life of a person or community, i.e. the milestones and marks that characterize it or make it memorable for individuals. This is about life in the sense of a close history: its events, characters, places.

The visual biography begins by identifying an event or a date which participants see as marking a ‘before’ and an ‘after’, or even a continuum in their lives. This event is placed/written/illustrated on the paper on the wall. Each participant then locates (by drawing, writing or somehow representing dates/names) events or specific memories of their life experience or local experience that they consider significant. Each participant shares their narrative or memories of key events. At the end of the testimony or narrative of each individual the group is invited to reflect on what they see in these timelines and social biography.

For more a detailed description of how to do this activity see Appendix 6.

### C 4. BODY BASED WAYS TO ELICIT MEMORY

As has been well noted in the large body of literature on violence and trauma, traumatic experiences of violence and terror that directly attack the human body (e.g. rape, sexual abuse, torture), often make it difficult or impossible for an individual to verbalize, communicate or narrate the experience and pain.

Body based ways to work through memory offer ways to communicate that are not necessarily verbal and to represent what is frequently inexpressible, experiences that are held in the body as trauma. The images that are constructed can become symbols and representations of

the experience, responses, and emotions of the individual and the ways in which these inhabit the body.

Body based ways of working through memories can become vehicles to explore not solely traumatic memories but also resistance to violence or discipline, or pleasure and creativity.

### **C 4.1 BODY MAPS**

Maps of the body register the body as a place of, and vehicle for, traces of memory. In this method individuals use a variety of tools, artistic practices and materials (paint, markers, paper, clippings, fabrics) to create a visual representation of their bodies. They record marks and traces of experiences of suffering and violence (e.g., illness, wounds), as well as traces of resistance and pleasures.

In the same map emotions associated with traumatic experiences are symbolized (Galuska, 2007), as well as places in the body that are vehicles and receptors of memory.<sup>8</sup> This method explores body memory - memory as it is embodied in physical, emotional and symbolic traces - by tracing the outline of bodies on a surface that then becomes a canvas and means to explore and express feelings and perceptions.

Body maps allow for exploring aspects of sexual and reproductive violence, disease, and physical violence. It is based on the premise that the body remembers, i.e., that social memory and lived experiences leave their mark. It is a method which can be used with mixed groups to represent suffering or to trace its marks on the body. However, it has been used particularly with women and LGBT communities to track their experiences through the recognition and repositioning of the body as a place of memory and a testimonial vehicle, which at the same time recognizes it as the object of crimes and sexual humiliations.

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<sup>8</sup> This method is inspired by the pioneering community work of "the Memory Box" project, through which women living with HIV / AIDS, organized as the Bambanani women's group, drew up their body maps with the support of the artist Jane Solomon. Long Life - Positive HIV Stories, is a collaborative book based on the Body Maps. Solomon then also did body maps with men.



This is a method that challenges the separation between the body as a place of emotions, feelings and memories, and the mind as a rational sphere. It attempts to capture and allow for a means of expression and construction of memory of those events and actions that infringe directly on the body and sexuality (reproductive and sexual violence such as rape, sexual humiliation, prostitution and forced pregnancy and torture), and which tend to be silenced and not socially recognized.





▲ Body mapping at a memory workshop, Cartagena, Colombia, 2009. Photo by Jesús A. Colorado

Women tend to reconstruct the events of violence against their loved ones in detail, but tend to silence the history of sexual violence they have personally experienced (Das, 2008). These violations, however,

remain inscribed in social memory as public secrets - and in the bodies of individuals as individual memories that are not shared publicly (Riaño-Alcalá and Baines, 2011).

The body map method makes it possible to trace the marks of violences on bodies in their multiple effects, marks and dimensions - including the ways in which the body remembers, resists or survives. In considering the body as an active site of memory and not just as the passive receptacle of violence, the body is also considered as a place of resistance, hope and pleasure.

The process of making maps is one of self-exploration and remembrance through artistic expression, which begins with the individual decision of what position they want to take as another participant traces their body, as well as the colors, images, symbols and stories they choose to represent and inscribe in the traced body outline.

The process of body mapping involves an individual process of tracing and recognizing the body and, subsequently, a group process of looking (directing the view towards) and particularly seeing (perceiving with meaning), thus moving to an analysis and collective deconstruction of similarities, contrasts and differences in the way in which suffering is represented and the type of marks that the traumatic experience has left on individual bodies.

Once the map is finished participants construct an oral or written narrative about the map and the process of preparing it, or they share their body maps with other members of the group. According to group dynamics, safety and comfort, participants decide what they share and how. The visual product of the bodymap becomes a visual testimony of how social violence enters into and marks the individual body, and serves as a means to engage in collective dialogue.

For more a detailed description of how to do this activity see Appendix 7.

Narrative theatre has been used in Burundi as an approach for dealing with a variety of issues pertaining to the legacies of violence, poverty and trauma from war and to prepare communities for memory work.<sup>9</sup> Burundi is preparing (as of 2012) for setting up transitional justice mechanisms in order to deal with the legacy of violence, massive violation of human rights, and past atrocities. This brings about mixed feelings of hope and fear. It will be a context reopening past wounds. Discussions held in communities impacted by the war in Northern Burundi showed that community life as a whole was negatively affected by war, additional to the individual's suffering. Narrative theatre starts with the narratives of people – acknowledging that they know their story and what they need.

Opportunities are created for people to meet to share their stories and explore their problems together. The idea is that once these stories are shared, through means such as narrative theatre, people can then find their own creative solutions and build the environment that can help strengthen the social fabric. Narrative theatre then serves to link the stories that are told to the life, community, and development projects that participants propose. It aims to link past, present and future. In contexts of impunity where governments and politicians have promoted forgetting and have refused to foster mourning ceremonies as a way to avoid moral and political accountability, narrative theatre is an approach that can prepare people to conduct memory work. Because impunity is a constant source of frustration and trauma, it is crucial to develop mechanisms that increase personal and social psychological wellbeing in order to avoid further outbreak of acts of violence (vengeance). The longer individuals and communities suffer this lack of justice; sentiments of hate, fear, and vengeance tend to dominate the social. In narrative theatre process, stories told become the source of

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<sup>9</sup> Narrative theatre was developed within the specific local and cultural context of the Great Lake Region by Dr. Yvonne Sliep (War Trauma Foundation) and in partnership with the Centre Ubuntu of Burundi. See Yvonne Sliep, "Collective Healing: a social action approach, supplement to support sustainable use of Narrative Theatre" and "Healing Communities by strengthening social capital: A Narrative Theatre Approach; Training facilitators and community workers." War Trauma Foundation, Diemen, the Netherlands, 2009.

transformation that help individuals and communities live through the effects of this violence and healing.

### ***Narrative theatre***

*As described by Father Emmanuel Ntakirutimana from the Centre Ubuntu<sup>10</sup>*

The group maps' local resources (e.g. schools, health centres, NGOs, the market), evaluates how these resources are accessed or used (e.g. children have to walk a long way to get to school), and reflects on whether resources have increased over time.

The group discusses what the problems in the community are and reflects on what issues people consider a problem for them (e.g. poverty, domestic violence, alcoholism) and which ones have been long term (poverty) and which ones have not (killing and war). The idea with this discussion is for the group to understand how some community problems are symptoms of war trauma (alcoholism, domestic violence).

Once the problem is mapped, the group is asked to act it out in an improvisational play. As we are dealing with people rooted in oral tradition, there is no need for special training in theatre techniques. The crucial methodology is to help the participants in the forum understand the mapping of the problem, who is affected, and what are the effects on the various categories of people living in the community.

When this is understood, most of the community members can perform a play. The facilitator just gives the players a five minute consultation about their respective role in the play. And it works.

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<sup>10</sup> The Centre Ubuntu "is a laboratory of analysis and social action for the promotion of peace and reconciliation in Burundi and the Great Lakes Region." They see development as an integral process and based on the values of Ubuntu (understood in the Centre as "the synthesis of all the values that make a human person unique in her/his humanity and different from other creatures). Activities include drama projects, psychosocial counseling, peace education, and media programs. They have recently introduced socioeconomic development ventures like housing and goat farming, and the centre also conducts research on ongoing sociopolitical events in Burundi, supports grassroots communities, and offers training in project management." Taken from: <http://centre-ubuntu.bi/?q=en/node/86> and <http://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/burundi/peacebuilding-organisations/ubuntu-centre/>

Participants reflect on what happened while they were acting. Then a shift is made from the problem story to the desired story in the community. The community then acts that one out too and then discusses if the desired story is realistic. This process in general strengthens trust. “You see trust coming back in the community, and a sense of solidarity in the community which had been destroyed,” says Father Emmanuel.

A community forum can then express the main problems community members wish to see changed, do the mapping of the most worrisome one, analyze the root causes and the effects on individuals (children, young girls, young men, women, men and elderly people), and externalize the problem through plays (narrative theatre).

In the application of this method in Burundi the facilitators have seen participant groups start to demand accountability from their leaders on important issues in their community. It is at this stage when the community confronts issues of leadership, conflict resolution, trauma and that they start doing memory work, because “safety has come back to the community, and people become ready to talk, because they feel it is good for healing themselves and their community” says Father Emmanuel.

## **C 5. MATERIAL AND VISUALLY BASED WAYS TO ELICIT MEMORY**

### **C 5.1 THE MATERIAL WORLD: PHOTOS AND OTHER OBJECTS OF AND FOR MEMORY**

Groups provide individuals with the frameworks with which they can locate their memories, and memories are localized through a sort of mapping. We place our memories in a series of mental spaces (social frameworks) that the group provides. But these mental spaces require the material support of objects.

The sphere of material objects –photos, decorations, altars, coats of arms, seals, newspaper clippings, those objects that we keep around us– is ordered in certain ways which we rely on to give us a sense of continuity, and to serve as markers of temporal changes (Radley, 1990).



- ▲ A leader from Mampuján, a rural town massively displaced by the paramilitaries, shares a photo mural created in his community to reconstruct the memory of the violence and the responses and resistance to displacement. Cartagena, Colombia. 2009. Photo by Jesús A. Colorado

Some objects (keepsakes/memorabilia) play a particular and powerful role in shaping the past and maintaining the memories of a collective past. Some objects (e.g., a candle, emblems) are significant for evoking cultural beliefs and feelings, which gives these objects a political character.

We remember or recount with the support of the world of objects (keepsakes). Memory is also shaped by the ways we organize and locate this world of objects (in photo albums, on walls, desks, or on shelves). Objects are also part of a material world that is ordered to sustain certain myths and ideologies about both individuals and cultures.

Once the subject disappears, the leftover clothes become evidence of one's existence there in time and place. Objects thus carry with them aspects of the person who is no longer there and that, in daily life, point to a certain presence of someone now gone. Objects bridge the material world we live in and our memories. They are not meaning per se but carriers of meaning. Insignificant or mundane as they may appear, their eloquence in the broad social narrative, in the demand for justice, is undeniable.

From the public art project in Medellín, Colombia  
 “The Skin of Memory.  
 Barrio Antioquia. Past, Present and Future”

**Photos** (individual photos and albums) are central cultural artifacts in our management of the memory of the past, and serve as reference points for connecting to many possible pasts. Looking at or organizing photos is an act of recognition of the past. When the photo records an individual, family, or community event this register becomes part of the event, because even though the experience may or may not have been not very satisfying, the photo will project the emotions toward the future.

In memory workshops or interviews the photos and objects that the participants bring and collect, or which the facilitators select, can serve as triggers of memory and establish a dynamic of look-tell-listen between the narrator and interviewer (who may be the memory worker, the interviewer, or another participant). This relationship promotes recognition of the past and the reconstruction of the story.<sup>11</sup>

In these cases participants or interviewees are asked to select a meaningful object or photo that signifies their memory. They then recreate their memory on the basis of what the object or photo evokes.

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11 See other examples of activities with photographs in the book *Afirmación y resistencia La comunidad como apoyo*, *Affirmation and resistance: the community as support*, Beristain and Riera, 2002.





▲ Photo brought to a memory workshop in Magdalena, Colombia. 2009. Photo by Jesús A. Colorado

This work of selection involves recognition of the past, but also a process of assessing the importance of certain events and people and the reason why the object is saved. The purpose is to explore the objects as forms and traces of memory and their potential for reconstructing the past.

Similarly, the use of cameras by the participants to document their environment, significant objects and the traces of memory in their immediate and local setting offers another method for documenting memories, as well as a means for participants to represent the past from their perspective.

## **PhotoPAR as a resource for remembering, healing, and transformation**

*By Brinton Lykes, Boston College, USA*

PhotoPAR is a participatory action research process through which local communities have sought to document social injustice and develop processes for personal and social transformation through visual documentation of a wide range of inequalities (Wang and Burris, 1997), including gross violations of human rights and participatory action research. The women in Chajul, Guatemala, responded enthusiastically to the idea of undertaking a project using photography and storytelling to focus on re-membling their community's story of more than 36 years of armed conflict and their strategies for survival and recovery in their own voices.<sup>12</sup>

Twenty women out of the more than 100 in the local women's organization, Association of Maya Ixil Women – New Dawn, deployed visual resources and storytelling through a variety of group activities and actions to re-present experiences of violence, loss, economic exploitation, racial discrimination and early initiatives toward social, economic, and political healing. Through collaborating with them in this process I hoped to facilitate (1) an increase in local women's listening skills, (2) recovery of local or indigenous knowledge and traditions, and (3) the development of critical thinking skills while creating spaces wherein historically marginalized women who had suffered gross violations of human rights could (4) identify their feelings, (5) share sorrows, (6) voice their varied and even contradictory understandings of the causes and consequences of historic and contemporary violence, and (7) develop action-based responses.

Each woman was given a point and shoot camera. In initial workshops we practiced using the cameras, role played ethical dilemmas in 'taking pictures', and discussed the strengths and limitations of formal versus spontaneous photography. Each woman then took 24 photographs per month, focusing on themes that we were identifying through participatory exercises. After

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12 For a more extensive definition and discussion of Photo PAR, see Lykes, 2001a; 2001b; Women of PhotoVoice/ADMI & Lykes 2000. For a documentation on how these Mayan women have documented their community stories and their survival strategies, see Belenky et. al., 1986 and Lykes, 1997.

each roll was developed and returned to the photographer, she picked 4-6 pictures that she 'liked' or that she thought 'best represented the month's theme' and recounted a story about each picture. The stories ranged from verbatim accounts of what the pictured person had recounted to the photographer's story about taking the picture or her memories of 'similar' experiences that she had represented in the photograph. These stories were transcribed and yoked to the relevant picture, generating what they called a photovoice. I, or one of the other internationalist collaborators in the project, facilitated workshops wherein Maya women selected from the photovoices that had been previously generated and gathered in small groups of 3 – 5 women who then developed a second level of analysis. Specifically, an individual photovoice (story + photo) was presented to the small group of women spanning several generations to elicit additional ideas. Finally, participants in the small groups shared their hopes or wishes for the future. The original photovoice and texts transcribed from these small group photoelicitation processes were the core of the final 56 photonarratives that were published in *Voices and Images of Maya Ixil Women* (Women of PhotoVoice/ADMI and Lykes 2000).

Through seeking permission, taking pictures of and interviewing co-participants, local townspeople, and others in adjacent villages, and subsequently storying these photographs, the participants documented human rights violations in their own words and images, re-membering the past, and overcoming a legacy of fear and shame as well as anxieties about 'speaking in front of' and 'to others' about their her-story. The workshops were contexts wherein Maya women began to think comparatively about women's oppression, recognizing diversities in experiences between the town and its rural villages. Through creative dramatizations and dialogue women performed emotional, non-verbal, and oral representations of their social suffering, experiences that were then re-storied in the texts and images that they combined. Over time they constituted and performed new subjectivities as photographers, oral historians, bookkeepers, project coordinators, and marimba players. Maya co-researchers thus embodied and performed their rights as indigenous women.

## C 5.2 IMAGE AND MEMORY QUILTS

Quilts reconstruct memories through image making in the same way that *molas*, *arpilleras*,<sup>13</sup> and other textile traditions are used by their creators in diverse cultural contexts for storytelling, i.e. as a means of socio-cultural communication and oral tradition.

This method seeks to activate remembering on the basis of image retrieval, i.e. of memory as image. Thus the memory is constructed by appealing to time as a painting: the colors, smells, textures, rhythms, shapes that make, transport or tell of the significant moment or traumatic event. The process is one of image-making in the present by re-remembering images of the event(s) and by simultaneously working through imagination and re-presentation of these events using materials of various colors and textures.

This work can be done using papers of different textures, colors and sizes and color markers.<sup>14</sup> Each individual works on a square of paper on which they evoke a significant event of their life in reference to the specific topic of the workshop, or a scene they experienced that they want to document-narrate.

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13 Mola's are a traditional textile art of the Kuna people of Colombia and Panama which uses several layers of different coloured cloth in a reverse appliqué. Arpilleras are fabric appliqué collages made throughout the Andean region.

14 This method is based on the pioneering work of Cynthia Cohen (1999), who was then with the Oral History Center of Boston, who takes up the tradition and artistic production of African-American women quilt makers. Her description of the process is available online: here <http://jonah.eastern.edu/emme/1999summer/cohen.html>.



▲ Memory Quilt elaborated by a group of women in Trujillo, Valle. 2008. Photo by Jesús A. Colorado

During the preparation of their images, participants have the opportunity to share or tell stories amongst each other, or to work separately if they prefer. Once the individual images are done, each person puts their image in any of the quilt spaces (see pictures) and shares their memories with the group. At the end of this process a memory quilt has been created. It is a form of collective yet plural narrative “woven” with images and individual memories.

The collective story is not just the sum of the individual images but the way in which these images are related and are sewn, spatially, in the patchwork quilt, and the various ways these can be seen: individually or together, in vertical or horizontal rows, or diagonally (see photos).

That is, the quilt becomes a visual metaphor of the collective memory and of the different ways in which individual memories and events that mark the lives of people in times of war are related to those of others (e.g. similar pain and suffering, affected by the same event, common languages or symbols of memory) or may differ from each other.

The literature on the artistic tradition of quilts by African American women sees quilts as a collective art that validates the expression of



we arrange it in a particular sequence to describe what happened, how, where and why. The work of the narrator then is to recount the events, sometime turning them into a story (a sequence of events with a beginning and an end), and to convey particular stress and meaning through verbal (tone, volume, speed) and performative (position, use of body) means. We use narratives in everyday life contexts, in the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and cultural repertoires and also when we write, to provide historical explanations about a period of time, answer questions (from a researcher, a judge or a friend) or provide testimony about something that happened. Overall, narrative based ways to elicit memory engage with the verbal, embodied and performative way of any telling. Narratives can be oral, written, visual or performative.

### C 6.1 INTERVIEWS

An interview in the context of memory work is a conversation between two people in which the interviewer seeks to create a humane and respectful environment which allows the respondent to testify in their own voice. In-depth interviews seek to reconstruct individual narratives of for example (a) those who have lived, suffered or witnessed various forms of violence, (b) those who have had experience in the ranks of some of the armed groups and their political networks of support, (c) those who have participated in initiatives of resistance to war and armed domination.

The interviews and the questions asked are structured so as to enable a safe and respectful listening on the part of the interviewer, and telling or bearing witness by the interviewee.





▲ Documents shown during a family interview. Monteria, Cordoba, Colombia, 2010.  
Photo by Pilar Riaño

The strategy used in Colombia by the Commission is to conduct interviews with victims, former armed combatants, social and political leaders, government workers, and workers of non-governmental organizations. These interviews seek to shed light on the events and dynamics of the conflict, the social and political contexts surrounding the events, and the ways events are remembered and made sense of. Interviews with each of these people of different backgrounds seek to answer different questions.



The specificity of an interview for the construction of historical memory is that the questions and interviewer's attitude should inspire the evocation of memories and the building of a detailed account about certain events in the past, what happened and how, but also of how the events were felt and lived, i.e., a story from the interviewee's perspective and ways of remembering and making sense of the past.

The interview complements and deepens the more episodic nature of memories that are shared in the workshops, and allows for a more detailed and thorough reconstruction of the events and their impacts<sup>15</sup> and allows the interviewer to listen to that history and those aspects of the history or memory of the individual that tend to be silenced.

Given that in the work of constructing historical memory we have considered a memory that attest to the different voices of victims, we suggest that in the interviews differences (of gender, sexuality, class, race, ethnicity, language, caste, religion, region, generation and physical ability) are noted and inquired about. Specifically, there can be a focus on the ways that violence and the actions of armed or repressive agents affect or are experienced differentially by individuals, in their responses, emotions and ways of remembering. See Appendix 11 for a more detailed discussion of how to do this sort of interview.

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<sup>15</sup> The interview guidelines included here are not directed to the documentation of cases for judicial truth. For documentation of cases for this purpose see Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris, 2008.

## Language: Using translation and interpretation

*By Sara Koopman, Spanish for Social Change, USA*

Even if someone speaks two languages, they may feel more comfortable speaking about traumatic events or their resistance to violence in their first language, so consider using translation and interpretation. Translation is written, interpretation is verbal. When doing memory work you may need to use both, which may mean using two people since these are different skills which require different talents and training. Even when using an interpreter it is ideal to have a bilingual facilitator or at the very least have the facilitator offer a welcome, say, in the indigenous language. This can help make everyone feel welcome to speak in the language of their choice.

When working with limited resources you may be working with an interpreter who does not have much professional experience with interpreting and there are things you can do to support them and improve your communication through them.

If using consecutive interpretation, rather than simultaneous (which generally requires equipment unless the interpreter is whispering into only one person's ear), be sure to speak in short phrases and then pause for the interpretation. In group discussions some will want to respond immediately, so the facilitator needs to insist everyone pause between speakers for the interpretation. Pauses between every speaker are also required if using simultaneous interpreting, since the interpreting is actually a sentence or two behind. Ensure that the interpreter always has paper and pen to take notes while you are speaking. Even in simultaneous mode this will be necessary for names and numbers.

Talk to the interpreter beforehand about concepts that may not translate directly and strategize about the best way to convey them. For example in many languages a concept like justice does not have a single word to describe it.

Be not use 'tell her' or 'ask him' when speaking, as this establishes you as speaking to the interpreter, rather than directly to the person you are trying to communicate with. To establish more connection it is also important to *look* at the person you are speaking to, rather than looking at the interpreter. Likewise, be sure the interpreter does not use 'he said' 'she said' but instead speaks directly as if they were the person they are interpreting for. If they need to speak as themselves they can use the third person, e.g. "the interpreter needs to take a break." Do be sure to give them regular breaks because interpreting accuracy plummets after half an hour. Ideally interpreters work in pairs and take turns every 15 minutes.

Interviews allow for a deeper and more intimate conversation, and as such they are an important place for the interviewer to listen, facilitate, and validate the telling of those aspects of memory, emotions and stories that tend to be silenced or not elaborated because these may be outside what are socially considered to be significant or acceptable memories.

— One form of interview is the life story interview, the purpose of which is to narrate the life of a person according to a sequence of events that can be organized both chronologically (from childhood to adulthood) or thematically. In the context of a historical memory project these interviews generally seek to link the individual story, and the social relations of this person, to larger events and social contexts in which they were placed. The next section of this document elaborates on life stories as a method for the reconstruction of historical memory.

## **C 6.2 LIFE STORIES OR SOCIAL BIOGRAPHIES**

As noted in the first part of this material, the work of reconstructing the historical memory of traumatic events that occur in a specific place and time generally seeks historical clarification and the documentation of voices that have been excluded from histories about the conflict or mass violence. It may also seek to dignify these voices and the memory of the victims, the territory and their community.

The methods of life stories or social biographies contribute to the task of reconstructing historical memory and, in particular, to the dignification of the memory of the victims.

The reconstruction of a person's life is a means by which their memory is conserved and rescued from the silence, or from the segmented versions about who they were, what they were like, what they did, or thought, or what they suffered.

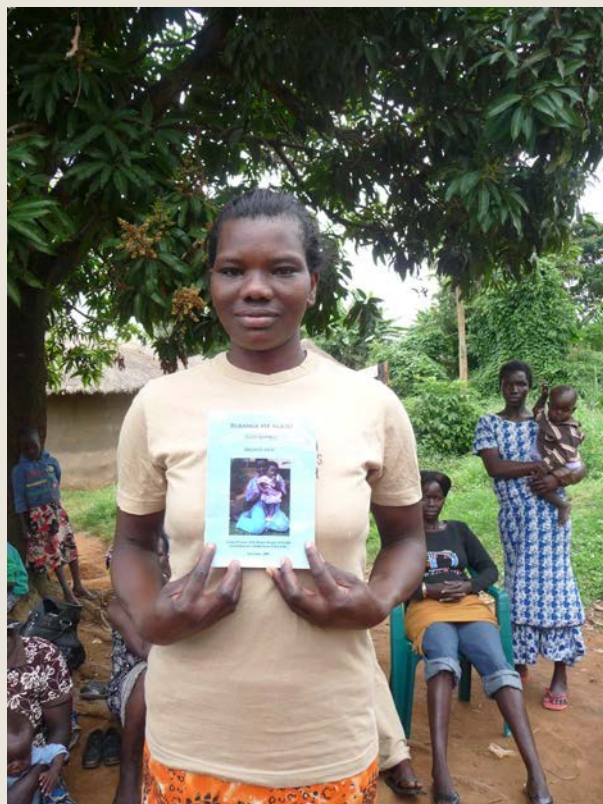
In this document we also refer to life stories as social biographies, to emphasize how in the broader work of historical memory it is necessary to place the life of an individual in the various contexts in which it unfolds (family, social, political, organizational, local-national, the conflict) (Burke, n.d.). A social biography in this way seeks to understand the life trajectory of a person in relation to broader processes affecting the development of these trajectories (e.g. the emergence of the women's peaceful resistance movement, the consolidation of territorial control by an armed group, or the failure of a national peace process.)

To remember the person not only as a victim or a witness of an event, but as a woman or man with a face, with certain ways of doing and being, the small or large actions they took in the community, tastes and pleasures and personality traits - all this rescues a person from the silence or the stigmatization and dehumanization of their memory.

In short, narrating a life and its social biography recovers the identity of the individual and their legacy for the future (Portelli, 1991). The life story is a story about the life of a person that is told to another, either by that same person or by others who knew them (Angrosino, 1989).

Pierre Bourdieu (1990: 29) notes that to talk about a life story "is to at least assume, and this is not superfluous, that life is a story and that (...) a life is inseparably the joining of all of the events of an individual existence conceived of as a story, and the telling of that story."

In this same text Bourdieu notes how in ordinary language life tends to be described as a path with crossroads and traps, or as a process, a path which is traced and a route that is followed.



▲ Life history books in Northern Uganda. Justice and Reconciliation Project. 2010.  
Photo by Pilar Riaño

The methods of life history seek to explore and find those clues that are both temporal (critical or emblematic times of change and transition, as well as those that mark the beginning and end of periods) and meaningful (events or situations because they are emblematic of who we are, the paths taken, their challenges and pitfalls), both from the point of view of the person about whom the life story is told, as well as of those who remember them.

Two possible types of reconstruction of life histories or social biographies are: (a) the reconstruction of the life stories of people who were victims of lethal violence, based on interviews and discussions with those who

knew them and through the collection of materials (photos, archives, documents, memorabilia and objects ) about this person, and (b) life stories of people who are alive and whose history is reconstructed on the basis of their own account and the collection of materials and objects that symbolize their life.

In both types of life history, the reconstruction covers some specific areas:<sup>16</sup>

- The biography of the person: biographical data (date and place of birth, immigration history, cultural roots, occupation), the key or critical events in the life of the person (events that mark the beginning and end of a period in their life, or which are emblematic of the successes and challenges they experienced and the path they took), the emblematic memories of that period, the features that identify this person and the way they are remembered (way of being, personality, ways of relating to others, dreams, aspirations and ideas) and the feelings evoked in those who remember them.
- Their world of family and friends: the composition of their family over the years, the people (family and friends) that were or are significant to them (in each major period) and those who were or are an important influence in what they did or do.
- Their social roles: their organizational history (what activities, initiatives and organizations were or are they involved in), the most important activities, successes and challenges; their hopes, wishes and ideas and the path they traced in the community; the events they witnessed and that shaped their life; and how gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, caste, language, region, religion, physical ability, class or other differences shaped their initiatives and the opportunities they had.

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<sup>16</sup> Several of the questions and components that are included in this section are based on the guide "Remembering so as not to repeat" produced by the Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris in Colombia (2008).

- Their legacy: the way they want to be remembered or how others want them to be remembered, the legacy left by this person.

The life story of a person can be either a full reconstruction of their life, or the reconstruction of a significant period of their life, or a kind of biographical silhouette in which certain periods and events are covered more generally and others in more detail.

### **The Life History Project (Gulu, Uganda)**

*By Ketty Anyeko and Erin Baines, Justice and Reconciliation Project, Uganda*

This project was originally started by a Canadian professor as part of a research project to document the life stories of women who had spent ten or more years in the rebel group, the Lord's Resistance Army. It later received support of a local NGO, the Justice and Reconciliation Project, to sustain the interest women who participated in the project had in forming their own advocacy organization. Between 2009 and 2011 the Life History Project documented the life stories of 25 women who were forced to marry senior level commanders and bear children in the rebel group's bases in Sudan. After their escape, women attempted to rebuild their lives in the outskirts of Gulu town where they had access to humanitarian aid, and educational facilities for their children. Their relocation to Gulu town was also an attempt to obtain a degree of anonymity, as they were experiencing stigma and attacks in their home villages because of their association with commanders who had inflicted terror on the civilian population. They thus experienced the challenge of living in silence, yet apart from other community members, given their past experiences of violent forced marriage and pregnancy. The project was an effort to provide a safe space in which to remember, to document their stories, and, later, to encourage their efforts to self-organize. As they gained confidence in the process they began to engage in advocacy with local officials to work towards acknowledgement of what had happened, and to press for reparation and justice with other groups of similarly affected women.

The group was formed by a volunteer to the project who spent 11 years in captivity in the LRA, and invited other long-term survivors to join over the course of a year. The group began with eight members and grew to 25 by the end. They met every Saturday at one of the women's homes in the outskirts of town, and under a mango tree. They engaged in a rotating grant and income generation activities first, and then would do storytelling as part of the Life History Project. The women were asked to each draw their life map and present it one at a time to the rest of the group. This took nearly a year. The group then met bi-monthly to discuss topics of interest, such as 'the identity of children' or 'marriages upon returning home'. At the end of the project the stories – which had been recorded and transcribed – were organized into personal history books received by each woman, including photos.

The women said it was the first time they had shared such stories with one another, and they were relieved to learn that they were not alone in their experiences in captivity. While in the LRA, they were separated from each other and forbidden to speak to one another. The personal history books had special meaning for the women, who wanted to keep them to one day explain to their children what had happened to them, where they were from, and how much they loved them. After a period of time, the women felt they should not stop at talking 'amongst themselves', but begin to engage communities that had been affected by LRA violence, to share stories of what they had suffered through and to learn what the communities in turn had endured. This would be a form of community reconciliation. The women began to travel in small groups to home villages to do this. The women also began to meet local government officials to talk about their particular experiences and seek acknowledgement and reparation.



## Methods

*Life maps:* The women were given papers, crayons, pencils, markers and asked to draw a map illustrating their life journeys right from pre-abduction, during abduction and post abduction. They drew symbols that had meanings in their lives for instance; some drew a container to signify thirst. Each woman later narrated stories of her life map to the entire group one at a time over a period of nearly a year. The women encouraged each other emotionally and psychologically.

*Place maps:* Just like the life maps, the women maps of the areas they lived while in captivity, these maps illustrate circumstances under which violence was perpetrated.

*Photography:* some of the women were given a digital camera which they used to take photos of things/objects that remind them of an important event that triggered either good or bad memories significant in their lives. We later met with them to discuss the photos they took and why they are important.

*Memory quilts:* a group of women were given papers and drawing materials. Each of them was asked to draw one significant event that changed their lives for the better or for worse and later pieced the quilts together. Volunteers narrated stories of what they draw on their quilts. There were instances where several quilts had related stories or similar encounters, many drew their abductions or how they watched a friend being killed.

*Body maps:* we invited a group of 6 women in a residential retreat. One volunteer lay down in a position she wanted and another woman helped in drawing the outline of her body then she using markers indicated marks of physical, emotional and psychological pain on the map, as well as sources of strength. She later shared stories of her map with either the researcher or the entire group. This tool was very important in enabling the women speak about sexual violence. They told stories of what they saw happen to other women than themselves.

*In-depth interviews:* this one-on-one interviews enabled the women to narrate their life histories and filled in the gaps of stories they told in the group for their personal history books.

Storytelling was also employed in the style of ‘wang-o’, an Acholi storytelling practice in communities. Women were given or chose specific themes (justice, reparation, children, for example) and then shared stories to learn from one another.

### **Products/outcome**

Documentation of the women’s stories has helped develop a new and unique perspective of the war in Uganda. More and more women wanted to form similar groups and, with the help of the original group, nine new storytelling groups formed. The Justice and Reconciliation Project recognized the need to support the project beyond the life of the original documentation project, and offered to mentor women leaders. This led to the formation of the Women’s Advocacy Network, with 200 survivors as members. A launch of the network was held in June 2012 with members of Government, the military and civil society in attendance to encourage the women to continue. The Justice and Reconciliation Project, recognizing the importance of documenting and advocating women’s experiences of war, formed the Gender Justice Unit in 2012.

## **C 7. PROCESS AND GROUP DYNAMICS: MEMORY WORKSHOPS**

The methods described above can be done individually, but also together in group based formats such as workshops that can last anywhere from one afternoon, to two consecutive days, to a series of shorter meetings over several weeks. A workshop consists of a series of activities that facilitate the evocation and elaboration of memories of one or more traumatic events.

The memory workshop is a collective event in which a group of people gather to remember and participate in certain activities focused on the exercise of remembering. As such, the process which is followed and the sequence of activities requires a design that takes into account who

the participants are (who to bring together], the social and cultural dynamics of the place, the time that is available for working together, the context of the conflict in which it is carried out, and the type of previous relationships that exist among participants and their emotional situation. Understandings of historical memory presented in section B and emotional wellbeing issues presented in section D can also be considered when designing activities.

### **Should one ensure that the groups are non contentious?**

*by Rita Manchanda, South Asian Forum for Human Rights, India*

If there are victims from both 'sides' then the risks involved are much greater in escalating inter community tensions and the management of confrontations and tensions could become much more challenging. For example, the tension between the Kashmiri Hindu women and the Kashmiri Muslim women was very difficult to manage. And yet one of the strengths was in the collective reconstruction that cut across the divides and created a different third frame of analysis and understanding. In the context of divided communities and the need to bridge the fault line, is there any subtle normative direction given in the workshops that emphasizes histories/experiences of co-existence and interdependence between divided communities?

We suggest structuring a workshop into two or three core activities in which participants are invited to remember or comment on specific aspects of their experiences.

The workshop can begin with an introduction of its purpose, a presentation of the work of the organization facilitating the workshop, and the establishment of agreements for interactions between participants and facilitators.

Critical to the development of the workshop and the creation of a safe and relational space for story telling is the inclusion of initial activities that facilitate introduction of participants, trust building, group

cohesion and the respect for differences in viewpoint and experiences. The section that follows and the Appendix provide examples of this.

Each memory building activity described here combines both a time for remembering or recounting individually as well as for collective reflection on the memories and what these memories suggest to participants (i.e. commonalities, differences, narrative threads, tensions).

This collectivization and reflection lead, in general, to new instances of memory activation, and to the construction of other narratives or stories, which are sometimes constructed from a collective “we” or sometimes from certain differences (such as generation, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, region, religion, language, caste, class, or physical ability).

We suggest that at first a memory workshop focus on the individual reconstruction of memory. The facilitator of the workshop can ask a series of questions that are meant to activate individual memories of certain traumatic events, or of a specific period of violence or transition in the region.

Starting with these memory “trigger” questions, participants articulate narratives that capture their memories. These narratives are of two types: visual and oral accounts.

It is important to include the visual because the memories are made up of both ideas and concepts, as well as feelings, images and perceptions (i.e. colors, shapes, smells, sounds). As such, the opportunity to express visually opens up the possibility of making visible emotional dimensions that do not necessarily pass through the rational or the verbal (Rodríguez, et al., 2006). The visual furthermore may overcome linguistic and literacy barriers.

In a second stage, participants can integrate the visual stories into a sort of collective narrative. The group, as a community that has formed and that exists for the time of the workshop, can ask: What do these collective memory narratives say about us as a group?

This movement to the formulation of questions that investigate the relationship between individual stories and the various collective narratives that are constructed in the workshop has a specific relevance. It allows for the exploration of both the exemplary capacity of memory to draw out elements in common amongst the participants, and the impacts that violent events and war have on people and on the social fabric.

In this second phase of the workshop, participants can undertake a more formal analysis of what they see in the visual narrative of the group and identify common narrative threads, differences and contrasts as well as events and emotions that mark shared experiences and memories.

The memories that are reconstructed in a memory workshop offer empirical data and stories, explanations, symbolizations, and interpretations. In this sense they can be analyzed and used in many ways.

That is to say, in a memory workshop there is a process of collective knowledge construction based on the systematic evidence that results from the methods used.

See Appendix 9 for a sample memory workshop agenda and Appendix 10 for a description of a closing activity.

### **C 7.1 WORKSHOP FACILITATION AND SEQUENCING**

In Colombia the sequence of activities in the memory workshops hosted by the Commission has been the following:<sup>17</sup>

*Introduction:* An informative introduction about the Commission, its mission and the reason for participating in the meeting and the type of work or collaboration that the Commission proposes to do in local communities, and their commitments and responsibilities regarding participants and to the material that is collected in the workshop.

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<sup>17</sup> A more detailed description and discussion of such workshops as held in Colombia can be found in Riaño 2008; 1999.

During the introduction, the aim is to create an environment of trust and respect through the development of basic agreements for interactions between participants and for the work of building historical memory (e.g. confidentiality, respect, not judging).

During the development of the basic agreements, it is important that the facilitators ensure that the participants understand the objectives and characteristics of the workshop, their rights as participants, and the limits to confidentiality in a group format, and the potential effects of recalling traumatic events.

It is important to mention and review these agreed guidelines in the workshop, and to emphasize confidentiality and the right of each participant to suspend or terminate their participation at any time.

*Thematic transition:* The subject of memory in its socio-political dimension is introduced through asking and discussing with participants the reasons why we remember and forget (as individuals and as a collective, community or society), and specifically why we remember when we seek to shed light on and bear witness to acts of violence, and to construct historical memory. The role and contribution of participants in the processes of constructing historical memory is explored.

In the thematic transition, the issue of memory in its psychosocial dimensions is discussed. The impact that the collective acts of remembering and forgetting have on the wellbeing of people is highlighted. A warning is given that this process requires the participants' emotional commitment.

*Remembering (Part one):* Memories are built of significant events of the violence from the perspective of the group, but with clear individual traces. The explicit vision is to construct historical memory in the context of the conflict and from the voices of local communities.

Tools such as maps, timelines, and image quilts are used to reconstruct a memory of what happened and its impact (past and present) and towards the "for what" established at the beginning of the workshop.

*The future:* This section explores the relationships that the participants establish between the past, the present, and their hopes for the future. In this activity the demands and ideas that participants have about their daily life and their hopes are explored, as are their ideas about reparations and their thoughts on what should be done so that the tragic events that affected them are not repeated.

*Remembering (Part two and second day):* This section explores specific aspects of the experiences and memories of the participants in more depth (time and detail). This is done in small groups (six people) which have a certain homogeneity among participants so as to develop more sensitive and specific topics, such as sexual or physical violence, resistance and organizing strategies, land and displacement, and the memories of young men and women.

*Closing:* To close the workshop participants and members of the Commission review the commitments that the Commission is making to the participants and their communities. There is then a discussion of what follows after the workshop, and a space is opened for the participants to express their recommendations for the work of constructing historical memory, for a review of their expectations for a future based on a collective agenda, and for the reiteration of their demands for reparations.

Group memory work should also have a *sequence* that takes into account, on the one hand, the need to ensure the construction of a climate of trust and safety and, on the other hand, the need to recognize the “emotional” process that may be experienced by participants.

In this sense, it is important to design a series of techniques to be implemented sequentially that are intended to create a certain environment and respond to certain emotional reactions.

It is therefore suggested that the workshop be planned with a layering of activities that promote a climate of trust such as the following agenda:

*Welcome activity:* Through icebreakers that are intended to inspire and to motivate people to be active participants.

*Group and confidence building activity:* This is an important part of the workshop. The use of certain group exercises can help people feel that they can rely on support and help during the activity and, at the same time, can support others. Everyone feels that they are involved, and are not simply listeners. These are exercises that seek to generate situations that make clear the need for the support of others, and to generate the certainty that support will be there when needed. Once these activities are carried out, the workshop can begin.

*Expression-reflection activity:* These activities are designed to address the thematic transition to political and psychosocial issues and to talk about remembering and planning for the future. They make use of the methods described above (maps, walks, biographies, quilts, etc.). One can also use skits, role play, story construction, and other activities.







▲ Group building activity – Gulu, Uganda. Justice and Reconciliation Project. 2011.  
Photo by Erin Baines

*Activities for group relaxation and well-being:* These activities are done when there is tiredness or tension in the group. They aim to relieve this and to make the group space less rigid. It is essential to plan a relaxation activity for the close, with the aim of creating dynamics that allow people to leave the event with a feeling of well-being (Chauca and Bustamante, 2004:30-34).

When preparing the invitation to the workshop it is necessary to ensure that it: (a) communicates to potential participants the purpose of the workshop, who sponsors it, and its extent. For example, in the Colombian context it is important that they understand that the Commission does research and documentation and does not deliver material reparations or take evidence with legal weight, (b) consider whether, based on local

dynamics, the group should be composed of people who know each other or not.

The choice of venue in which to conduct the workshop is very important. The location must be appropriate and safe to: (a) work initially with a group of twenty people, then (b) break into small groups (enough spaces for this work), and (c) allow for privacy and not be exposed to noise.

It is also worth selecting a place that does not represent risk to participants, and is not associated with dynamics in or specific viewpoints on the armed conflict, or with defined political positions.



# Chapter D

## D

### ARCHIVING, DOCUMENTING, AND MEMORIALIZIZING

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▲ Photo by Jesús A. Colorado, Memory Workshop, Cartagena, 2009

## D 1. ARCHIVING

An archive is any collection of physical traces of the past that has been organized in some way that makes it possible to find and use information. An archive, in the broadest sense, can range from a collection of drawings produced in one of the memory work activities described above, to a set of audio recordings of oral history interviews, to an online collection of photos, videos, and newspaper articles about the conflict, to a physical space housing official or institutional documents, personal documents from activists, commemorative objects, posters, and more. An archive could cover a range of topics, from losses, to specific social groups, the history of a particular organization, documentation of human rights abuses, to life histories of peacemakers. An archive might be formally curated, or it could be set up as something that anyone can add to. A formal space and archival training is not necessarily required.<sup>18</sup> What is key is a commitment to ensuring that the documents are stored and managed ethically and responsibly, with the aim of making them more widely available or safely preserved.

*More than a repository of objects or texts, the archive is also the process of selecting, ordering and preserving the past. It is simultaneously any accessible collection that potentially yields data, and a site for critical reflection and contestation of its social, political, and historical construction. The archive is also a widespread social practice. We archive ourselves in action, in our files, and on our shelves, as well as on Facebook, YouTube, blogs, and in photos and videos, through every available medium.*

*Hirsch and Taylor, 2012*

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<sup>18</sup> Should you want to set up a more formal space your organization may be able to receive some support for this from a local public or university library. The organization Archivists Without Borders may also be able to offer support with setting up a more formal archiving system. The Documentation Affinity Group of the International Center for Transitional Justice is also a useful resource. See their guide Documenting Truth (Bickford et al, 2009) and also the guide The Records of NGO's: Memory ... to be shared: A practical guide in 60 questions (available in Arabic, Croatian, English, French, German, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish) (LeGoff, n.d.).

## Uses and strategies for archival work

Archives and archival work are key memory work strategies used by a variety of formal and informal organizations. The pioneer work of organizations such as the South African History Archive (SAHA) or Memoria Abierta (Open Memory) (Argentina) illustrate the power of archives and archival strategies to: a) collect, preserve and make available printed, visual or audio documentation regarding mass violations of human rights or mass violence, b) create new sources to document histories of resistance, oral histories or silenced events and, c) facilitate ample and democratic access to information and knowledge on the truth of what happened in particular periods or events.

**This list of archival strategies used by the South African History Archive (SAHA)** provides a detailed example of the rich and vast terrain and uses of archives to:

- Preserve documents, photographs, posters, music, artifacts and oral histories that reflect resistance. For example, SAHA has a collection of nearly 5000 apartheid-era struggle posters donated by various activists<sup>19</sup> that are now used in commemorative events and outreach efforts aimed at drawing on the visual vocabulary of the past to inform and enrich contemporary struggles for justice.
- Locate and collect existing documents on specific topics under-represented in archives or largely inaccessible to the public. For example the TRC Project (2003 –2006) of SAHA in conjunction with the University of the Witwatersrand added 30 new archival collections related to the TRC.
- Obtain the release of documents by both public and private bodies under Freedom of Information legislation either as part of truth recovery efforts or in support of ongoing struggles for justice.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> See SAHA publication *Images of defiance*

<sup>20</sup> See SAHA publication *Paper Wars*; see also the work of the National Security Archive

- Collect oral histories to fill in gaps in the historical record and give voice and visibility to groups that have been excluded from the record. For example, SAHA interviewed community members from three poor communities in South Africa in 2007 - 2008, to explore the extent to which life had or had not changed since South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994 and to interrogate the socio-economic legacies of apartheid.<sup>21</sup>
- Conduct art / memory workshops to capture histories excluded from official truth telling bodies such as the TRC. For example SAHA used art-making in combination with archival artifacts and oral history to explore the Khulumani Support Group members' memories relating to repression and violence on the East Rand in the lead up to the first democratic elections in South Africa, and to record and interpret these memories.<sup>22</sup>
- Work with young people to explore and document local histories. For example, SAHA trained community interns in the large township of Tembisa in 2010 – 2011 to capture stories of life and activism in this marginalized community.

*By Catherine Kennedy, SAHA*

Archiving can be both a way to do memory work, and a way to inspire it. Memory workers could, for example, ask people to share stories, documents, photos and artifacts to add to the archive. Artifacts -everyday objects that are connected to a memory of a person or story about the past-, are important archival material. Rather than relinquishing treasured items that are used to keep memories alive, photos can be taken of these. Precious documents and photos can also be photographed or scanned while in people's homes. The project "Vestigios [traces]" by Memoria Abierta in Argentina is an example. Memoria Abierta invited relatives and friends of the victims of the dictatorship to identify material objects or mementos they kept. Photos

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<sup>21</sup> See SAHA publication *Forgotten voices in the present* and related DVD *A dream deferred* -

<sup>22</sup> See SAHA publication *Katorus stories*

were taken of each object and the object's owner was asked to share its story. A virtual photo mosaic archive was created. It provides access to each photo and the story behind it and offers a glimpse of very personal stories while also contributing to the construction of collective memory.<sup>23</sup>

The items collected in an archive can also then be used in various ways as a spark for continued memory work. They can be used on a large paper timeline in a workshop where participants are asked to share stories to fill in the gaps and respond to newspaper articles or official documents they feel are misleading. The stories shared can then be added to the archive. Materials from archives can be used in classrooms to teach about the histories of conflict, violence and resistance. They can also be exhibited in public spaces to inspire conversations and education. Materials have been shared as this kind of spark in various creative public ways, from radio documentaries<sup>24</sup>, to comic books and photonovellas, to guides for educators, to murals, to videos and multimedia DVDs,<sup>25</sup> and in physical as well as online exhibits.<sup>26</sup> Artifacts have even been displayed on a traveling converted bus turned transitory museum of memory in Medellín, Colombia.

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<sup>23</sup> See Memoria Abierta

<sup>24</sup> See SAHA's CD of radio documentaries *Voices from our past*

<sup>25</sup> See SAHA's DVD and related educators' guide on John Vorster Square, the feared police station where security police reigned in apartheid South Africa

<sup>26</sup> See for example SAHA commemorative virtual exhibition that allow visitors to the exhibition to post comments or anecdotes



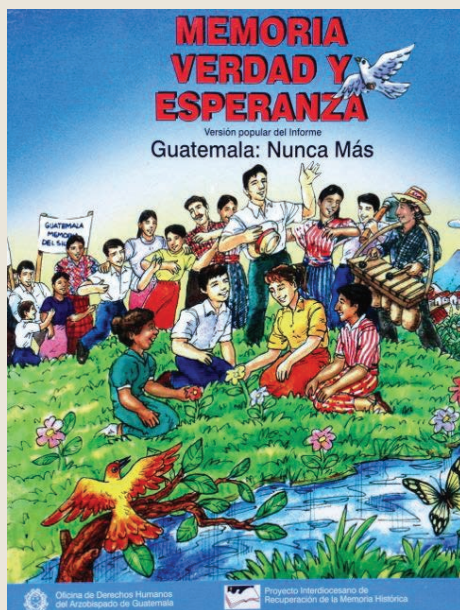
- ▲ The Skin of Memory. A Public Art Project in Barrio Antioquia, Medellín, Colombia. Photo: Carlos Sánchez, 2000

## Ways of Sharing Memory Work

*By Brenda Pineda, of the Human Rights office of the Archbishopric of Guatemala, Historical Memory Unit, [ddhh@odhag.org.gt](mailto:ddhh@odhag.org.gt)*

Our first step in returning the memory work to communities and doing follow-up with them was to design, along with our Reconciliation outreach workers, an easier to understand version of the REMHI Report: *Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica*, Recovery of Historical Memory (Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala, 1998) issued by the church under Bishop Gerardi in 1998. The grassroots version of the report “Memory, Truth and Hope” is more accessible for the majority of the population. This report contains a summary of the four volumes, written in language more appropriate for the context of the communities and with images.

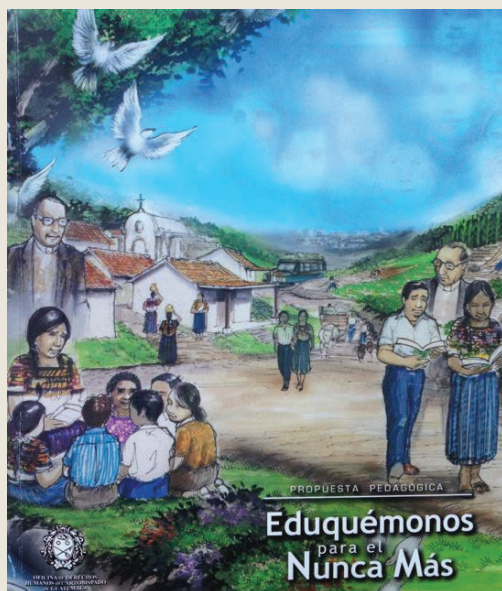




### ▲ The Grassroot's Guatemalan Report

We wrote it so that it could facilitate reflection on both the contents, and what it is that makes up historical memory. This is why we also wrote a Memory, Truth and Hope Guide, based on the Grassroots Report and directed at adults and community leaders. Its aim is to initiate the process of giving back memories and explaining and clarifying what happened and learning from the past through a step by step methodology for understanding what happened in the conflict, analyzing its causes and effects, interpreting history, understanding the present, reflecting, and making a commitment to a reality of Never Again.

In the year 2000 we began a process of training pastoral and community leaders from different areas from the country. Every year a new group is integrated into the process and commits to replicating the training with their respective communities.



#### ▲ Guatemalan Lesson Planner for teachers

Later, we realized the need for new generations to also know what happened, as outlined in one of the recommendations of the REMHI. We need to widely share the results of the investigations about the past and give them back through testimonial and pedagogical materials that can be used by teachers in schools, and offer a symbolic recognition of the experiences described in the testimonies and dignify the victims. These ways of returning memory can also help youth learn lessons from them. This is why the ‘Let us educate ourselves so it never happens again’ Lesson Plans were designed with the help of teachers from several areas as well as professionals from different disciplines. Advocacy has been done for several years to lobby the Ministry of Education to include it in the official primary and secondary curriculums, but as of yet it has not been included.



▲ Indigenous Guatemalan teachers receiving training on using pedagogical material

Hasta comunidades enteras fueron señaladas de "guerrilleras" por estar ubicadas en ciertos lugares del país. Especialmente entre el año 1978 y el año 1983, las comunidades del Ixcán, de las Verapaces, el área Ixil y el altiplano central, de quienes se sospechaba estar al lado de la guerrilla, seguido vivían ataques militares, bombardeos y masacres.



▲ Image from the grassroots report, Spanish text above drawing reads "Even entire communities were fingered as 'guerillas' for being located in certain areas of the country. Particularly between the years 1978 and 1982, the communities in the Ixcán, Verapaces, Ixil and central highlands that were suspected of supporting the guerillas repeatedly lived through military attacks, bombardments, and massacres."

An archive can also be used to *recuperate and share* *disperse documents about the conflict* and offer various opportunities to use them and respond to these, from online comments, to writing on a large piece of paper on the wall next to an official report in an exhibit, to formal speaking events. Obtaining official documents often requires a formal access to information request. Organizations such as SAHA and Archivist without Borders have done campaigns, conducted training and developed resources to widely share how to navigate the often cumbersome and complicated process of access to information.<sup>27</sup>

Not all countries have freedom of information legislation and some memory workers have successfully pushed to win this right. In the last ten years some forty countries have introduced legislation to facilitate access to information.<sup>28</sup> Even when the right to information exists, extended requests, campaigns, and even lawsuits may be required to get some documents be declassified. Privacy laws are sometimes cited to protect government officials, though most countries recognize that privacy does not apply to official information.

## SOME ISSUES TO CONSIDERING WHEN DOING ARCHIVAL WORK

*Privacy* is a concern in regards to materials collected from individuals and organizations. Many may be more comfortable sharing their material with the archive if their personal information (name, address, and other identifying information) is masked. There are various ways to anonymize data to protect the identity of people. This may also be important to suggest in cases where sharing information could put people at risk.

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<sup>27</sup> See SAHA website for its *Freedom of Information Programme (FOIP)*

<sup>28</sup> Those interested in campaigning for such legislation can find many resources from the global network of freedom of information advocates. Their site, *freedominfo.org*, “describes best practices, consolidates lessons learned, explains campaign strategies and tactics, and links the efforts of freedom of information advocates around the world.” You may also find the technical advice and funding available from the *Open Society Foundation* useful, as well as the best practices and other advice from the Freedom of Information project at *Privacy International*.

Others might ask that materials be shared only after a certain period of time, after they are dead, or only for specific purposes. It will help if it is clear who will have ongoing *ownership and control* of the archive and how it will be managed. If in doing memory work interviews were done or documents collected before the possibility of an archive was considered, it is important to go back to those people and request formal permission before making them publicly available in the archive.

*Copyright issues* should also be discussed with those donating materials when applicable. They may choose to retain copyright, or offer the rights to reproduce the materials only for educational, scholarly and other non-commercial uses. It may not be clear who owns the copyright to some of the materials you might wish to archive. Posters, for example, may have been designed by an anonymous collective. If you face this dilemma, see the South African History Archive discussion of how they are addressing this issue.

The *safety* of material and the risks of storing it in particular locations need to be considered. Sometimes it is not yet safe to share materials from an archive. In these cases it may also not be safe to physically possess certain documents about human rights violations or the conflict. Such materials are sometimes sent out of the country for safekeeping and organizations like Archivists without Borders work with local organizations to facilitate digitalization of material and storage outside of the country.

## D 2. DOCUMENTING (COUNTS, LISTS)

The forms of memory work and practices of remembering described so far provide important documentation for a variety of uses: historical clarification, reconstruction of the critical events, dignifying victims, making visible victims' responses and resistance, finding evidence, and creating databases or archives. In all, they serve as documents of memory (Brown, 2012) for a variety of present and future purposes.

Most of the organizations consulted in the preparation of this material see documentation as a key component and function of their memory

work. This work is closely linked to archival work but it further includes specific activities that generate quantitative and qualitative information. For example, in the face of wildly different numbers given for the dead in a conflict, some groups have engaged in their own counts. In Croatia, the organization Documenta believes that if there is a factual basis for memory, further steps can be taken. Their work seeks to document the human losses of the war, to collect personal memories of war, create an antiwar campaign archive, and to put together an oral history library.

### **Documenta Project: Human Losses in Croatia 1991-1995**

*By Vesna Terselic, Documenta, Croatia*

This project seeks to determine the number of victims of the 1991-1995 war. The overview of all victims with their names and basic data – day, month and year of birth, occupation, ethnicity, religion, etc, time and place of violation (death), type of violation, status in war – civilian-military status at death, perpetrators (if known) and other relevant data.

- 5,672 victims have been registered; more than 2,000 field interviews have been conducted;
- Victim's cards (questionnaires) have been filled by researchers for more than 2,200 victims and signed by relatives or eyewitnesses;
- More than 8,500 pages of court documentation have been scanned and archived;
- More than 2,000 photographs of sites of death, mass graves, cemeteries and documentation from private and official archives have been taken.

To construct a count of the dead, Documenta gathered names of victims and visited the families of persons killed or disappeared to collect their stories, mementos and to scan photos (see box). In Liberia this process was also successfully used as a way to elicit mass participation in historical memory work. Even when a formal truth commission process has been held some may not have reported deaths or other crimes out of fear or for other reasons. In Peru for example, a community registry was established after

the Truth Commission had submitted their report. The registry contains many cases not considered by the commission. In El Salvador, a count and genetic database of missing and potentially stolen children is maintained by the National Search Commission for Children Disappeared during the Conflict. The commission was created by executive decree after a 2005 sentence of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights condemned the Salvadoran state for the disappearance of two children (Ernestina and Arlinda Serrano) by the army in 1985, during the civil war. It functions as an autonomous institution, but depends on an annual budget through the Executive branch. Since the Commission was installed in 2010 it has established a permanent gene bank that provides genetic information of those who lost their children during the civil war. The current estimate is that some 900 children are missing. The commission has so far managed to facilitate ten re-encounters of people who were adopted as children in the US, Canada, Europe, Mexico and Central America. It has also set up a web site available in five languages, through which users can make contact in a discreet way. The Commission has a general coordinator, a geneticist, six investigators, two social workers and one psychologist. The work does not end with the re-encounters, but also focuses on community level solidarity groups that support other victims of the armed conflict.<sup>29</sup>

### **A Victim's Count: The Snowball Method in Zimbabwe's Diamond fields**

*By Farai Maguwu, Center for Research and Development, Zimbabwe*

It can be hard to know how many people were injured in a conflict. In Zimbabwe, one organization created a 'victim count' project to document the violence committed by the Zimbabwean's state security forces in the diamond fields. They used a snowball method of victim identification.

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<sup>29</sup> The description of the work of the Commission is a contribution of Victor Manuel Perez from the National Search Commission for Children Disappeared during the Conflict.

In repressive states there is a high concentration of secret agents in public, private and communal spheres. Victims fear that the state may want to prosecute them or further persecute them for the crime they suffered for. In such cases there is a high level of mistrust and victims may deny that they suffered abuse for fear of recrimination. This was the case in the military crackdown in Zimbabwe's Marange diamond fields which left, in our estimates, more than 500 people dead between November and December 2008. Some of the victims were severely tortured and thrown in jail thereafter without treatment. Those released from the Police Cells went into hiding without having received treatment fearing that state security agents would follow them up. Consequently those who escaped after being tortured in the diamond fields did not go to hospital fearing arrest and further torture. However, a few hundred victims who had been severely tortured were "dumped" in hospitals by state security agents. The victims usually gave false addresses to hospital staff whilst others fled the hospital as soon as they felt better, fearing arrest and further torture. There was surveillance at the hospitals to ensure that no pictures of the victims were taken.

The Center for Research and Development engaged sympathetic hospital staff members who would give us access to the victims, sometimes early in the morning, before dawn, or in the dead of the night. The hospital staff also helped with the body count as they alerted the Centre's staff each time a body was brought to the hospital mortuary from Marange. Hospital records of Marange victims were also obtained which gave CRD a rough estimate of how many victims were being admitted at this facility per day. CRD also arranged to support some of the victims with treatment through a partnership with some private doctors who assist victims of human rights abuses. But the majority of the victims remained in hiding in spite of the serious injuries they had sustained. They viewed everyone with suspicion as some of them had been abducted and tortured again by the state security agents. After failing to get the cooperation of the victims for a couple of days, we managed to find a victim who was familiar



with our work. This victim then assisted CRD to identify other victims whom she knew. Once they got assistance the victims went on to identify other victims, until more than a hundred received assistance. We call this the Snowball Method. It is effective because it reduces the risk of retribution for both the victim and the victim identifier.

Our reports, which contained chilling stories from victims and survivors, went out to the whole world resulting in the Kimberly Process (KP) Certification Scheme sending a fact-finding mission to Zimbabwe between 29 June and 4 July 2009. Because we had built a good relationship with the victims we managed to get a sample of volunteers among the victims who came forward to narrate their stories to the KP team. The KP team produced a damning report calling on the KPCS to temporarily ban diamonds coming from the Marange region until the human rights abuses had stopped.

### D 3. COMMEMORATIVE PRACTICES AND CEREMONY

Commemorative practices in which a person (or group of) or event(s) are remembered are another expressive means of memory work by survivors, victim's organizations, transitional justice interventions, and State led interventions. During commemorations participants join in the work of memory through ceremony or rituals, performative speeches or texts, and embodied presence. A commemoration may involve official and formalized occasions of public memory, or intimate and close moments of family remembrance. It may be something done once, or something done at a regular time in the same place (say, every first Wednesday), or it may involve the regular presence of an object, either in one place (such as a memorial bench), or traveling to different sites (a memorial exhibit). When there is not the political and thus physical space for commemoration it may have to be more ephemeral, such as weekly pickets or chalking in front of the homes of perpetrators or former torture sites. Commemoration can also be done online (memorial websites), and even through cell phones. Commemorative information

about sites can be made available as either a text or an audio or video clip to those who call or text in to a phone number posted at the site or scan a smart barcode posted there or through an app (application) that recognizes the users physical location through GPS.

### Weekly vigils:

The Mothers of the Disappeared in Argentina (las Madres) famously held weekly vigils at the Plaza de Mayo during the dictatorship, asking to know what had happened to their children. They continue to hold these vigils today, 35 years later. The practice has now spread around the world and regular vigils are held by many other groups of family members of the disappeared. *The Indonesian Association of Families of the Disappeared* (IKOHI) and other victims groups, pictured below, directly inspired by las Madres, hold a vigil every Thursday afternoon from four to five in front of Presidential Palace in Jakarta. They raise public awareness and pressure on the existing and unresolved cases of human rights violation in Indonesia during the dictatorship of Suharto from 1966 to 1998. As Mugiyanto, of IKOHI, puts it, they aim to send the president the message that “we are still here, we will never forget, and we are still demanding truth and justice”, in counter to implicit government policy to forget the past. By displaying the pictures and memorabilia of the victims, the group struggles “against forgetfulness”, or “Melawan Lupa” in the Indonesian language.





- ▲ Indonesian mothers of the disappeared at a Thursday rally in 1998. The woman with the white headband is Maria Sumarsih, one of the founders of the Thursday vigil. Photo courtesy of Mugiyanto, IKOGI



- ▲ Mugiyanto Chairperson of IKOGI and survivor of disappearance speaking in 1998 at a Thursday vigil in front of the Indonesian Presidential Palace to commemorate the 13th anniversary of the disappearance of 13 activists. Photo courtesy of Mugiyanto, IKOGI

### D 3.1 MEMORIALS

Memorials can be formal and informal, permanent, and less so. They might be as ephemeral as flowers on poles, or might be more solid objects built to serve as a lasting public tribute to a person, group or event. They can also be sites or structures that are preserved because of their ties to people or events.

Official monuments are often imposing; they offer glorified versions of people and events, and tend to represent history as timeless. Community (or ‘people-friendly’) memorials are meant to unlock memory and be accessible and compelling at eye level.<sup>30</sup> They might be made by local artists, such as those commissioned by the Sunday Times in South Africa, or made together by students or community members as a mosaic, mural, garden, tree with hand tied notes, quilt, or *arpillera* (appliqué cloth art).



- ▲ Memorial to the victims of the Atiak massacre. A visit by survivors during a community exchange with social leaders and survivors from Colombia. Atiak, Uganda, 2010. Photo by Erin Baines

<sup>30</sup> See SAHA's *Meeting History Face-to-Face: A Guide to Oral History*

Memorials may commemorate a particular event, a particular person, or those who died in a particular town. They might be as simple as a collection of stones with names of the dead and disappeared, or might be a formal granite memorial with those names. Memorials can dignify victims and ensure they are remembered in collective memory. Stories collected through memory work can also be memorialized by preserving them in an art form.

The creation of such memorials has generally happened through community organizing, and focusing on such a project has often strengthened such organizing and can draw new participants into memory work. Once completed memorials can inspire continued memory work, for example if events are held at the memorial where stories are shared.

### D 3.2 CEREMONY AND RITUAL

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How can ceremony make this work transformative?

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Opening and closing rituals can help to “stop time” and establish memory workshops or other memory reconstruction activities as a spacetime outside of the everyday. Ceremonies can be a way to incorporate indigenous practices and understandings of memory and healing, but ceremonies do not need to be traditional or established - they can be newly created for this work. They can help to open a safe space for remembrance and reflection. Ceremony can strengthen shared values (e.g. Ubuntu) and community norms, “When tied to ceremony, transformation becomes exponential: cognitive, emotional, spiritual”<sup>31</sup> Ceremony and ritual can move people from their heads to their hearts.

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31 Intervention by Sharon Tira at the workshop Dialogues on Memory: Strategies for reconstructing memories in conflict and post-conflict zones.

### Memory ceremonies for transformation:

*by Mark Marvey, Naymote, National Youth Movement for Transparent Elections, Liberia*

Amongst the most traditional ceremonies of remembrance are festivals that evolve around burial of dead persons. Such ceremonies however, have been and continue to be, characterized by periods of reflections, when the elderly or close relatives recount the life experiences of the dead and advance caution to the partakers of the ceremony. Although these ceremonies have commemorated the departure of loved ones, relatives or community members, societies in their wisdom have seen the need to draw lessons from the lives of those departed. The fundamental reason for this has been to inform the conduct of members that are still alive and, especially to ensure that they avoid mistakes made by the dead with the hope of inspiring change of attitudes amongst community members.

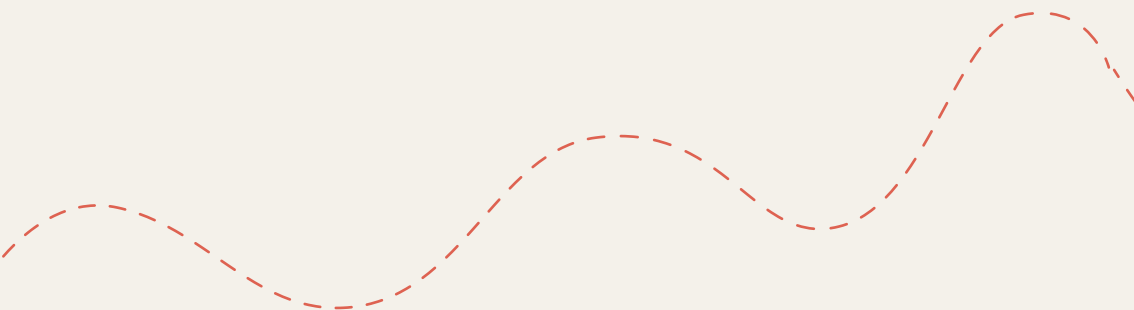
Inclusion of ceremony and circle work in memory work and truth telling scenarios creates a transformative space to re-story shared histories and for reflective dialogue and re-connecting. Ceremony is a way to honour those participating.

### Ceremony as a pathway of healing and transformation

By Paulette Regan and Brenda Ireland, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, TRC.

Canada's TRC is mandated to produce a comprehensive report on the history of the Indian residential school system that for over a century, removed Indigenous children from their families and communities, with devastating consequences. Thousands of students in the schools suffered severe sexual and physical abuse and most children lost connections with their families, languages and cultures. The Commission will make recommendations to the Government of Canada concerning the Indian Residential Schools' system (IRS) and experience including: the history, purpose, operation and supervision of the IRS system, the effect and consequences of IRS (including systemic harms, intergenerational consequences and the impact on human dignity) and the ongoing legacy of the residential schools.

Ceremony and ritual play a key role in TRC national and community events, and more broadly, there are many other community-based projects in which Indigenous peoples draw on the ceremonies, rituals and oral history traditions that are integral to their own culturally specific laws. Ceremony can strengthen shared values and community norms. As part of cultural revitalization and the rebuilding of their nations, Indigenous peoples in Canada are using these embodied practices to remember their past together. Ceremony and healing rituals prepare participants to work through difficult emotions associated with trauma by creating safe space for memory, the sharing of stories, reflection, healing and transformation to occur. Collectively, these traditional practices are powerful and dynamic; they can be adapted to new circumstances. Ceremony is essential to the work of healing and transformation; it moves people from their heads to their hearts.







# Chapter E

## E

### THE ETHICAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF MEMORY PROCESSES

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As already mentioned, work on memory involves various aspects that can compromise the wellbeing of persons and affect the relations amongst those who make up the group or collective, as well as the relations they have with their surroundings.

Historical memory reconstruction projects can have a major impact on the psychosocial well being of the people involved in them. These impacts can be positive, but these projects may also give rise to situations and conflicts which, if not properly cared for, can lead to the deepening of feelings and relationships that are harmful for victims.

This section reflects on the ethical and psychosocial dimensions of memory work and provides suggestions for addressing ethical, safety and emotional risks in the work. It concludes with several observations about group processes in memory work.



▲ Memory Workshop, Cartagena, Colombia 2009. Photo by Jesús A. Colorado

## E 1. ETHICAL AND SAFETY FRAMEWORKS FOR MEMORY WORK

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How do we do this work safely?

How do we do this work ethically?

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It is important to establish ethical standards that allow the processes to be regulated and managed such that the integrity, centrality of, and respect for victims is prioritized.

In this vein, we offer here suggestions of considerations that can guide memory workers in the design, implementation, and evaluation of memory workshops and/or activities.

Those involved in memory reconstruction processes need to know and assume the principles established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Respect for fundamental rights, dignity, the worth of all people, and non-discrimination principles must be respected, as well as the

right of individuals to privacy, confidentiality, self-determination and autonomy.

In regards to autonomy and freedom, it must be ensured that information about the memory work is properly disseminated beforehand and that this is complete and explains the purpose, objectives, relevance of the project, as well as risks that persons may incur by participating in the work. In this way the participant is allowed to make the decision to participate or not, according to their needs, values and preferences.

Interaction between people requires trust, confidentiality, openness, cooperation and mutual responsibility - in this case, among the participants who are asked to participate. It may not be possible to establish a direct relationship of this kind with some of those that are key to the construction of memory. In such an event an attempt can be made to make contact with a person close to and accepted by them, who could serve as a bridge or link. Historical memory processes can be seen as an issue of public health and should promote healing of the social fabric and more connection in communities, not less.

During group and individual memory work it is necessary to start by establishing some basic agreements amongst participants, and between them and the memory workers and researchers to ensure respect for these principles. It must be made clear that participation is voluntary and that participants have the right to suspend both their participation in the session and in general in the process of historical memory at any time.

A critical ethical issue to be clear about is the risks that survivors and memory workers face and ways to mitigate these. For example, stories and personal documents kept in archives can be anonymized for safety. In ongoing conflicts or in authoritarian forms of government there is a danger of materials being confiscated and victims criminalized with false charges.

What people say or narrate in the processes of memory work should be maintained confidential, unless the person who is telling the story and providing the information explicitly authorizes its public use.

## E 2. SOME BASIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEMORY WORKERS

An invitation to remember can often serve as an outlet for feelings and words that have been repressed. It is essential that memory workers learn to recognize the emotions and behaviours that can arise when violent and very painful events are remembered. For many people it may serve as a space for speaking after many years of silence. It can serve as a reencounter with a pain that some describe as “asleep”. For others it may even be an experience that makes it possible to know facts that were unknown. This may relieve, or on occasion add to, suffering.

Although various experiences have shown that most victims respond to memory work with excitement, in some cases they may show signs of anxiety or pain that require special treatment. For example, they might be invited to leave the group for a while and be offered individual support by counsellors on site until they feel better.

In any case, it should be noted that reactions are always different and, as mentioned, not everyone gives equal weight and meaning to the events, nor feel the losses in the same way, nor express the same form and intensity of suffering.

The following considerations based on the work of the Network for Children and Families of Peru (see Chauca, 2007 and Redinfa, 2004) can allow for a better handling of the situations that tend to arise:<sup>32</sup>

*Human beings are unique individuals.* Although there are common behaviours and responses to a violent event, every situation is unique. The impact that a violent event generates depends on many circumstances such as age, gender, family and social support, and previous life experiences. Therefore it is very important not to generalize or predict

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<sup>32</sup> See, Chauca, Rosa Lía. 2007.

impacts and personal reactions. Neither can we assess the situation of others based on our own experiences. Although these allow us a greater understanding of situations, our own experience is also unique.

*It can help when memory workers are from inside a community and understand its 'language' in all senses.* The gender and age of memory workers also makes a difference. Who can you encourage to serve as a memory worker? Youth will remember differently than elders. You may want to think about how to best facilitate the passage of memory from one generation to another. Youth can be taught and mentored as memory workers, which can make the stories personal for them.

*People and communities go through different processes.* Some have not had the opportunity to be heard in a respectful manner. This proposed reconstruction of history may be their first opportunity to talk about experiences that have been silenced. In other cases communities have been the object of many and varied interventions. As such their stories may be "hypernarrated", to the point that retelling them is something like returning to a script that has been repeated many times, and for that very reason somewhat separated from feelings.

*A safe space should be fostered.* We suggest that rules and recommendations be set which invite speaking, and which, especially, invite listening without judgment, without naming or judging the actions and feelings of others. It is important to avoid comments that minimize the pain, ("it's not that bad, don't worry") or that magnify it ("that's terrible!", "how have you not gone crazy?"). Relationships of warmth and confidence can be fostered so that words can flow without inhibition or coercion. These sessions should not be turned into interrogations to meet the needs and curiosities of the memory worker facilitating the group. Neither should narratives be stopped because of a sense that they are not on-topic. While memory workers play an important role as guides and facilitators in this space, they should be clear that the needs of victims come first. For some it will be necessary to talk and repeat their experience and their pain several times. Others will instead prefer to remain silent.

*The privacy of individuals should be respected.* One should avoid exploring those aspects that transgress victim's privacy and expose them to the prejudice and judgments of others. In this regard, for example, it is necessary to evaluate beforehand the appropriateness of having a mixed space (men and women, children and adults) and the importance of having separate spaces.

*Memory workers should avoid becoming "counsellors".* "You should do this or that." Instead they can help to identify and facilitate access to the personal, family, community and institutional resources which people can turn to.

*Techniques for expressing emotions should be thought through in advance.* They should be applied without affecting in major ways the relations of the group and the emotional integrity of the participants.<sup>33</sup> The use of symbolic acts through which one can express feelings of rage (e.g., through writing of situations, experiences and harmful feelings and then burning them) is one way of doing this. In this regard, experiential techniques are particularly relevant.

*Full emotional expression should be allowed.* People should be able to express their emotions, to cry or to shout. Emotions should not be repressed, but rather listened to with eye contact, speaking softly. If it is appropriate in the cultural context one can hold a hand, or offer a hug.

*Demonstrations of emotion should not be controlled.* It is not uncommon for memory workers to attempt to control demonstrations of emotion (such as tears, anger or despair) by promising things that cannot be ensured (this will pass soon, it will never happen again, tomorrow you will be better), or by offering resources that are not available to them. These responses should be avoided so as not to generate false expectations and the deterioration of the relations of trust that has been built.

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33 A very useful resource in Spanish is Red para la Infancia y la Familia, REDINFA. 2004.

*The memory worker should know how to use some preventative techniques.* When faced with signs of physical discomfort it is important for memory workers to know the use of some techniques, such as breathing and relaxation exercises designed to prevent the tension. Without abruptly breaking the workflow, times for relaxation and rest should be anticipated to allow for responding to stress.

*The needs of participants should be taken into account.* It is important to take careful note of the demands of those present, their needs and support requirements, and, when safe and appropriate, to file them with the relevant authorities. It is particularly important to address demands for psychological support, and there should be spaces that allow for providing specialized attention.

Different experiences show that memory processes allow some participants to become aware of their need for psychological accompaniment and support. Ideally the team of memory workers should be able to provide participants with relevant resources, but one of the issues to consider is that these will not always be available.

The above statements are based on the assumption that to identify and help mitigate the impacts of political violence, we must recognize that the interpretations, meanings and individual and collective actions that address the violence are constructed in dense and complex networks and patterns that give rise to particular ways of being in and perceiving the world. As such it is assumed that the harm (why they suffer and how they suffer, what is lost) and way in which it is faced (what is done, why, how, and with whom), cannot be established a priori, nor measured according to universal standards, nor inferred by reference to another event in another place, or to other people.

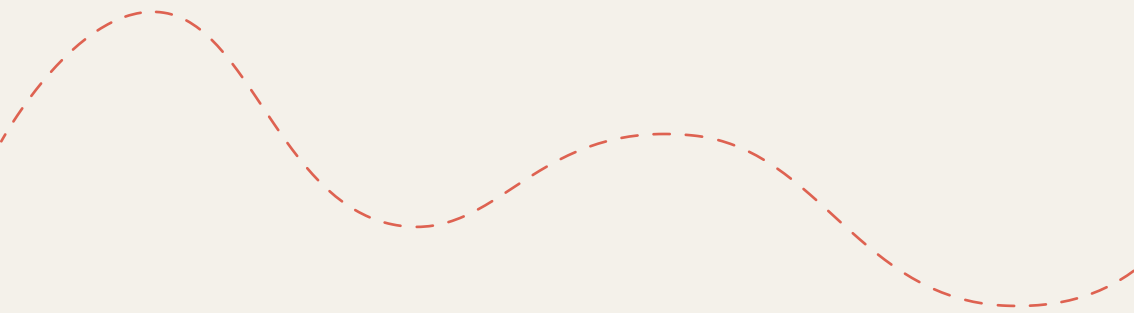
A violent event does not automatically result in processes of traumatisation or mental illness, as is sometimes supposed. The responses, as well as the harms and transformations, in the lives of people and communities do not have to do only with the characteristics of the violent event. They are also shaped by the characteristics of those who experience it, their history, and even their personal and

collective processes (both internal and external) of dealing with the violent act (Bello, et al., 2006).

### E 3. PSYCHOSOCIAL ASPECTS OF MEMORY WORK

In order to recognize the psychosocial aspects in the processes of memory reconstruction the following aspects and their respective guiding questions should be considered as part of the work:

- Identification, recognition and measurement of the losses and damages caused by violent acts.
- Reflection on the emotions, behaviours and reactions triggered by the violent events: sadness, anger, isolation, passivity, scepticism, distrust, and loss and change of beliefs, amongst others.
- Reflection on the context in which the events occurred in order to clarify the interests and relationships that made the violent events possible.
- Identification of the perpetrators, their motivations and intentions. Establish the ethical differences and distances between victims and victimizers.
- Reflection on the personal, family, and community resources that have been activated after the violent events and which have allowed people to face the lived events with dignity.
- Recognition and valuation of the leadership, organizing, actions of resistance and the efforts that are maintained despite the violence.
- Stimulation of the construction of proposals of cultural, symbolic and ritual acts that strengthen the processes of mourning and make “closure” possible through the process of doing memory work.





## E 4. PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID

Psychological first aid is psychological intervention in a critical moment. It is brief and immediate support offered to a person so as to restore their emotional stability and provide the conditions for continued personal equilibrium. It aims to restore equilibrium, offer support for self-control, offer emotional support, reduce the risk of death, and connect the person in crisis with social support resources.

Critical behaviors and emotions that call for psychological first aid:

1. Reaction of paralysis
2. Reaction of hyperactivity
3. Bodily reactions: shaking, nausea, vomiting, rapid heartbeat

### DO'S

Develop a responsible listening ear. Listen carefully, briefly summarizing back the feelings of the affected person. Make them feel that you understand what they are going through - this is empathy.

Be polite, honest and transparent: earn the trust and cooperation of the affected person.

Be realistic and objective.

Promote dignity and freedom so that victims can work on their problems.

Promote trust and security.

Be alert to opportunities to emphasize the qualities and strengths of the person.

Accept the right of those affected to feel that way.

Ask healthy and effective questions.

Ask for feedback to see if you understand correctly.

Be understanding of religious beliefs and spiritual practices.

Refer them to professionals (psychologists) as appropriate

**DON'TS**

- Do not offer something you cannot follow through on.
- Do not be afraid of silence, offer time to think and feel.
- Do not feel useless and frustrated. You are important and what you are doing is worthwhile.
- Do not show anxiety, because it can be easily transmitted to those affected.
- Do not give answers, but rather facilitate reflection.
- Do not allow the anger or hostility of the person to affect you.
- Do not pressure them to talk.
- Do not be afraid to admit that the affected person needs more help than you can provide.
- Do not allow people to focus only on negative aspects of the situation.
- Do not show pity or paternalism. Do not express yourself in an authoritarian or imposing manner.
- Do not expect the victim to function normally immediately.
- Do not confront a person in crisis if they are going to feel threatened.

**E 5. SOME TECHNIQUES FOR WORKING WITH EMOTIONS**

Based on the proposal for the development of historical memory in rural communities put forward by the Redinfa in Peru (Network for Children and Families) (Chauca and Bustamante, 2004), and based on work in the Colombian context, techniques are listed below which can encourage participation and the expression of, and coping with, emotions related to violence generated in the very exercise of remembering.

Memory workshops rely on so-called experiential techniques. These are techniques that motivate people to express feelings and role-play on the basis of their recollection of specific events. These techniques seek to work out hypothetical scenarios in which people play an active role and relive the situation in their own way.

Experiential techniques include particularly:

- Disinhibition, which allows people to loosen up and get ready for the work.
- Integration and trust, aimed at building a climate of safety and protection in the group so that participants feel supported and encouraged to offer mutual support.
- Free expression, which makes it possible to channel experiences and feelings through nonverbal activities (dance, modeling, drawing, etc.).
- Group wellbeing, whose aim is to make participants feel welcomed by the group.
- Relaxation, which seeks to close the workshop such that people leave relaxed and with feelings of well-being (Chauca and Bustamante, 2004:30-34).

## **E 6. CARING FOR THE MENTAL HEALTH OF MEMORY WORKERS:**

### **PREVENTING EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION**

Working with victims, being repeatedly exposed to stories of pain and suffering, listening to the horror, and even experiencing the fear and danger all generate mental health impacts on memory workers.

Identifying these impacts, recognizing them, and activating mechanisms to prevent and deal with them is the responsibility of the memory workers. They must strive for the care and integrity of those doing the memory work.

It should also be noted that if a team is “burnt out” or emotionally affected this will have a negative effect on the exercises done with the victims.

People who work with victims accumulate feelings of fear, helplessness, rage, and hopelessness that arise from their identification with the victims, from sharing situations of risk with them, and also from the difficulty of seeing the positive impacts and changes that come about

as a result of their work (what good do we do?). They have few spaces to express these emotions.

So-called emotional burnout is often the result of the tensions caused by the ethical dilemmas that are faced, an excessive dedication to the work (an absence of spaces of play and rest), and the overestimation of personal responsibility for the changes that are needed (feeling indispensable to people or communities).

This burn-out manifests in various ways:

- Physical ailments: muscle aches, insomnia, gastritis, etc.
- Scepticism: the sense that nothing changes, and will not change despite what one does or stops doing.
- Underestimation or overestimation of risk: difficulty in establishing and appropriately assessing threats to their own safety.
- Irritability and difficulty in interpersonal relationships at work and at home.
- Mechanization or dehumanization: insensitive responses to pain, due to an over-familiarity with it.
- Addictions and dependencies: consumption of liquor, cigarettes and psychoactive substances. These situations not only affect the health of the person, but may significantly deteriorate relations between team members and reduce their ability to work effectively.

Being aware and alert to the risk of burn-out in memory workers is therefore particularly important. Routines and spaces should be established which allow for:

- Memory workers to debrief and express the emotions that come up in their work and the situations that they face.
- Teams to have spaces for rest and recreation.
- Reviewing the goals and scope of work, so as not to take on situations that are beyond their capacity to act.

- For teams to analyze the contexts of their work, identify risks and the resources to address them and make personal and group safety plans.

To prevent burnout, the Avre Organization in Colombia (Corporación Avre) suggests holding regular workshops amongst memory workers themselves, with the following objectives (Camilo, 2001):

- Provide an opportunity for people to check if they are showing emotional or physical manifestations and changes in behaviour that are a sign of emotional burn-out.
- Allow memory workers to be aware of the impact generated by the context in their personal life, family, and in organizations.
- Offer a space for emotional expression of how these situations are affecting personal spaces, family, and the organization.
- Encourage a review of the dynamics of the context, the organization, and personal attitudes towards work that both facilitate and hinder the work, and which generate or prevent the onset of emotional exhaustion.

But psychosocial support for memory workers should happen not only in these regular workshops, but can also be an ongoing daily part of the work. Rituals can play a role as it can be chanting, playing music, breathing, dancing, shaking it out (to move energy through), or nightly journaling. Whatever it is, some daily space and/or ritual can be an important support.

Memory work is hard. Know that you are not alone. People around the world are doing memory work in contexts of ongoing conflict and messy 'post-conflict' contexts. The groups listed here, internal link to directory of participants, are doing work that can offer ideas and practices to work under these circumstances.



# Appendix

## MEMORY ACTIVITIES IN MORE DETAIL

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### 1. SPIDERWEB



▲ Memory workshop, Cartagena 2009. Photo by Jesús A. Colorado

**Objectives:** To introduce participants and begin to create an atmosphere of trust. To offer a visual image - a spider web - to introduce the subject of the construction of historical memory as an interactive and shared process.

**Process:** Standing in a large circle each person introduces themselves and briefly says something about themselves. Once the first person has introduced themselves they take the skein of yarn and throw it

towards another person that they do not know, without letting go of the end of the yarn. At the end the group, now tied into a web, tries to move towards the right and left, ahead and back. The yarn spider web is a metaphor for how we weave our memories as diverse members of particular groups.

## 2. INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION: WHY DO WE REMEMBER? WHY DO WE FORGET?

**Objective:** This activity examines the role and function of memory and remembering in societies, so that participants examine their visions and points of view on the role of the memory of the victims in processes of historical clarification.

**Process:** a. In this activity participants are asked to brainstorm, based on the question ‘why do we remember?’ And then, ‘why do we forget?’

b. The answers are registered on flipchart paper or a board, and once the majority of the participants have been heard a summary is read aloud of what the group sees as the “functions of memory” (see example in page 41). The group is invited to comment.

c. The following questions for discussion can be introduced:

What is the memory that we need to face the tasks of the present?

Being in the present, here, today, why do we construct historical memory? Does this call for a collective effort?

These questions seek to establish a bridge between the expectations of the participants and the process of construction of historical memory. They also seek to gain an understanding of what participants see as the role of memory work.

## 3. MENTAL MAPS (TRACES)

**Objective:** The objective of this activity is to develop a mental map of the local area in which participants identify:



- a. The traces of the violence and human suffering in the landscape and in their physical surroundings, or the places where specific events occurred.
- b. The traces or marks on the landscape of their organizing initiatives and of resistance, with the aim of increasing awareness and those places that are significant in their experience.

The group breaks out into groups of at most ten participants. We suggest dividing participants into groups of men, women and young people.

Ask the questions:

What are the significant traces of your memories of the violence and the suffering in the region \_\_\_\_\_?

What are the significant traces of your memories of resistance to violence (or of organizing initiatives) in the region?

Initially a place is identified that all participants recognize (for example, the plaza, a monument) and it is 'illustrated' or located on the paper.

Each participant locates the place of a trace that is significant in their memories (they can place a symbol, letters, or a drawing on the map) and shares with the group the memory associated with this trace.

Once all participants have located and shared their memories, the group looks at the finished map and makes observations about what they see:

What does this map tell us about the traces of violence and suffering?

This moment is also an opportunity for "completing" the map: add what participants consider should be in a map of significant traces that did not come out through individual memories.

The process of looking at the map is repeated with the question:

What does this map tell us about the traces of resistance (or organizing initiatives) in the region?

The group looks at the maps and discusses the following question:

Which are the broader events (conjunctures) that most widely affected the community or the region and left traces of violence or resistance?

This step should allow for placing on the map traces (of violence or resistance) that mark the history and historical memory of the region, and establishing those places that are emblematic of the violence and the suffering. The question does not seek to create a consensus around one version but rather to locate individual memories in a broader historical and spatial register.

#### 4. WALKING MAPS - WALKABOUTS

**Objectives:** Identify the emblematic places, scenes and significant routes in the memory of the inhabitants of the region and the ways they remember the events that took place there.

**Process:** This activity is done with a small group of people who have a deep knowledge of the surroundings.

First ask each participant to draw on their paper a route that goes by significant places that have traces or inspire testimony about the violence or the resistances, as well as places they consider historical because of the events that happened there and the memories about them.

The routes are shared and the group then collectively designs one route to take.

Stories are recorded at each place that is visited (ask: what happened here?) and a visual registry is taken (photos).

When the route is finished the group may return to the initial gathering place and develop a map of the route.

During the walk, discussion can be deepened on the impact of the violence, documenting changes and losses.

## 5. TIMELINES

**Objective:** To construct a chronological sequence (timeline or periodization), based on individual and group memories of the milestones and events that marked the life [or specific period] of the region.

**Process:** Initially each participant works individually, reconstructing their timeline based on the question:

What are the milestones or significant events in your memories of the violence and the suffering?

What are the milestones or significant events in your memories of the resistance (or the organizing initiatives) in the region?

Each participant presents their timeline and shares their memories. These timelines are placed on the wall. When finalizing the testimony or narrative of each individual, invite the group to reflect on what they see in this visual biography.

The group then works to create a collective timeline based on the question:

What are the critical regional conjunctures<sup>34</sup> in which these individual milestones and events happened?

Before beginning to identify the critical conjunctures, the group decides:

What is the date from which they will start to reconstruct events and the date on which they will finish?

This date has substantial implications since its choice reflects the perceptions of the group of the dynamics of the violence and of resistance. When finalizing the testimony or narrative of each individual, invite the group to reflect on what they observe in this visual timeline.

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<sup>34</sup> Conjuncture: this word refers to the combination of factors and circumstances in which specific or local events are framed. For example, the displacement of the inhabitants of a municipality is part of a larger conjuncture of the expansion and strategic control of territories by armed actors in the region.

## 6. VISUAL BIOGRAPHY

**Objective:** To reconstruct the memory (the historical life) of a period of the violence on the basis of the events, people, and memories of the participants.

**Process:** Identify an event or date that the participants considers marks a “before” and an “after” in their lives This date is placed/written/drawn on the paper on the wall.

Using this event as a reference point, each participant places on the paper and shares their memories sparked by the question:

What is an event, fact, date or person that is telling of the violence and the suffering during \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (a specific period)?

Which is an event, fact, date or person that is telling of the resistance of the women (or any other group) during \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (a specific period)?

When finalizing the testimony or narrative of each individual, the group reflects on what they observe in this visual social biography.

## 7. BODYMAPS

**Objective:** To identify the traces and marks of violence and suffering on the bodies of women and men. This activity seeks to identify - as possible - aspects of sexual and physical violence, either because during the activity some participants decide to share their stories privately, or because a registry of some of these marks are represented in the bodymaps. For this activity small and homogenous groups work well (for example: of similar age, gender, sexual orientation).

**Process:** Note on the process: when doing body maps it is very important to follow a gradual process of trust building in the group, of the participant with their body, and with the art materials. Two complementary activities should be considered:

a. Activities for building trust and loosening inhibitions, particularly those that put participants in touch with their body (for example, walking on tiptoes).

b. Introductory activities (warm-up) and activities that explore visual expression by means of colour. This can be through finger painting (trace marks freely) or with brushes (using large brush strokes).

The facilitator briefly introduces how our bodies, like the landscape, carry traces and marks of memory. The activity explores how our bodies remember through the question:

What are the traces of suffering on your body? What are the traces of resistance and hopes on your body?

Activity of connection between body and surroundings: ask participants to stand up and walk around, feeling their connection to the Earth and the energy that circulates between them. Feel your feet on the earth. Move your toes and the soles of your feet, push them against the ground. Raise your heels so that you can feel your calf muscles. Tap your legs, thighs, calves and feet so that they wake up. This can be done seated.

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Participants take turns drawing the silhouette of the body of another person.

Each participant looks for a place to work and begins to work on the silhouette of their body. It is important that the facilitator explain that there is no restriction on the way each participant wants to express these traces on their silhouette: they can use abstract expressionist drawings, symbols, words, spots, magazines cut outs, etcetera.

Before initiating work on the body outlines, give participants blank pages so that they can explore the media, the colors and forms of expression, using finger painting, brush strokes, or any other form.

Once the participants finalize their maps, these are placed on the wall.

Each participant shares their map. General Discussion:

What do we see? Commonalities? Differences?

Later the group discusses how the violence and the war affected differently the bodies of men, women, young people, LGBT people and indigenous and Afro-descendant people.

Close with a group well-being or relaxation activity.

## 8. IMAGE AND MEMORY QUILTS

**Objective:** To recognize how participants see themselves in the present, to identify their perspectives on the future, and on the role of truth, historical clarification, and reparations from a democratic perspective founded on the recognition of persons as citizens with rights. On the basis of this recognition evaluate actions - alliances, advocacy - that can be done so that the perspective on the future reflected in the quilt can come true.

**Process:** Introduce the activity reflecting on how all memory activities form a bridge not only between the present and the past, but also the past, present and future. If we go back to the ideas that were formulated in response to the question why do we remember, we can see that the future is as important here as the past and the present. In this activity we reflect on and examine who we are (or came to be) after what happened, and how we see the future. Give everyone a piece of paper so that they can create an image that explores the question:

How did we survive what happened?

Invite participants to explore the question by going back to the past as if it were a painting with certain images, scents, and people that we remember. When you remember how you survived you will think of some situations or moments that speak to or are an example of who you are today and how you survived. Some questions that can help to reconstruct these images-situations:

What objects, places, people, and activities do you remember about that moment? How did you feel? What scents, sounds or noises do you remember? What forms, colors and textures capture the memories, emotions or feelings that you want to communicate?

Everyone works individually on their image on a paper square, cutting, drawing, and gluing.

One by one each participant places their image in a matrix that becomes a quilt of pieces (use an outline of a matrix with the number of squares that corresponds to the number of participants), located on a wall visible to all the participants, and presents their image and the memories that it evokes. The listening and attention of the group to the story of each individual is very important.

When all participants have placed their image and shared their story, invite them to look at the quilt as a whole. Ask for their reactions and analysis:

What do you see? Commonalities? Differences? Reactions?

The facilitator comments on the sequence that the workshop has followed: past-present-future, and introduces the questions:

What are your hopes for the future? How do you see yourself in the future?

Each participant works on another square of paper and designs another image (or this part can be done by means of notes without images). Some questions that can help them construct their images of the future are: Who do I want to be in the future? What expectations do I have about the future?

Each individual picture is taped to the others, making a quilt of images about the past, the present and the future. Whoever wants to can share with the others what they wanted to express with their drawings.

Ask the questions:

What do you think we should do so that violent events like those we have remembered today are not repeated?

What do you think we can do collectively so that the community can move towards the future that you want?

Write down the answers. Let participants know that these answers will be reviewed towards the end of the workshop with the purpose

of formulating recommendations. This it is an important moment for examining the role that reparations and demands for truth and justice play in this group's perspective or expectations for the future.

## 9. SAMPLE AGENDA MEMORY WORKSHOP

### First Day

#### Introduction

- Length of time: Approximately an hour and half, but this depends on the questions and expectations that the group has.

Greeting, brief presentation of the facilitators, the organization, and the objectives of the workshop.

Presentation of participants: spider web activity (or another icebreaker).

Introduce the organization hosting the event: its aims, reach, tasks, and what type of collaboration it is asking for.

Then ask the group: What do you see as the possibilities for this type of work? What would you like the outcome of this workshop to be? The answers are written on butcher paper and are clarified and alternatives are suggested for those expectations that will not be met by the workshop.

Explain what products will result from this work (for example a report, book, photographic exhibition, formulation of a series of recommendations of public policy or a public presentation) and how the results will be returned to the community.

Come to an agreement with the group about the use that will be made of the materials created by the group during the workshop. Can photos of them be put online? Can they be shown in an exhibit? Included in a report?

Introduction of the objectives of the workshop and agenda.



Basic agreements.

**Objective:** To create an atmosphere of trust and respect that allows for sharing memories and giving testimony about the past.

If the facilitators consider that there is tension or distrust in the group this activity can be done before introducing each participant, with the purpose of developing common agreements for the operation and interaction of the group and to create from the beginning an atmosphere of respect, trust and nonaggression.

**Process:** The group discusses some agreements that allow the participants to feel comfortable and, as much as is possible, create an atmosphere of trust to be able to tell their stories and express their ideas. It is important to emphasize that these agreements will guide both exchanges between participants and with the facilitators. Ask the question:

What do you need from other participants, the facilitators and yourself so that we have an atmosphere of trust and tranquility to share experiences, memories and ideas?

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The agreements are written on butcher paper and put in a place visible to all participants. The idea is to reach basic agreements which all follow.

Once these agreements are discussed, two basic assumptions about participation in the workshop are presented: participation is voluntary (without any consequences if they decide not to speak or leave) and the information that is shared is confidential. Clarify the limits of confidentiality when information is compiled in a group format (although all the participants commit to confidentiality, facilitators cannot ensure that all participants will respect this agreement).

**Recording:** explain why you want to record the workshop and clarify the right of each participant to ask that the recording be interrupted, or that certain parts of what they say not be included. Ask for permission to record. Only then begin to record.

Mention the presence of a person for psycho-social support and ask:

What would you hope for as individuals and as a group from the person in charge of psycho-social support, from the other facilitators, and from the group as a whole in regards to offering appropriate emotional support and solidarity?

A memory activity from the methods mentioned above (Appendix 3-8).

A bodily activity to build group cohesion and trust.

A second memory activity.

Depending on the group and region, the facilitator chooses which activities to do on the first day and in what order. We suggest doing a maximum of two memory activities (in the order of past, present, future) and one psycho-social activity (between the memory activities) on the first day. The important thing is that the facilitator is tuned in to the group process. If the process of sharing is extended or if there is a need to take a break to offer individual support, it is important to do that, and if as a result there is only time for one activity it is preferable to privilege the process of the group over sticking to the agenda.

Closing for the day

Select one of the activities for well-being and relaxation.

## **Second day**

The objective of the second day is to work in a deeper way on some specific aspects of the construction of the historical memory by means of:

a. The exploration of a specific subject like physical and sexual violence, land, social movements and resistance initiatives, daily resistance, or the reconstruction of memories from the perspective of a specific group such as LGBT, men, women, young people or adults.

b. Deepen the evaluation and reconstruction of the impact of the war. That is to say, investigate in a deep way based on the following questions:

What changed after what happened? What and who changed what happened?

What personal, family and community losses did it cause? What significant economic, cultural, emotional and spiritual damages did it generate?

How did you face what happened?

c. Develop an agenda that considers both recommendations for the work of the organization coordinating the work as well as issues of reparations from the perspective of the group.

The structure of the day is flexible and should be decided on by agreement of the group, but it is characterized by work in small groups. This day is also an opportunity to conduct in-depth interviews.

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- For subjects such as land, maps can be used.
  - For subjects like organizing, social movements and resistance initiatives, timelines can be used.
  - To respond to questions about losses, an inventory can be made on butcher paper or you can construct a diagram that illustrates the losses.

## 10. CLOSING ACTIVITY

Recommendations and collective agenda.

**Objective:** Review hopes for the future and the demands and ideas that participants have expressed about justice and reparations, with the purpose of formulating a collective agenda that includes specific recommendations to include in a report.

**Process:** The facilitator summarizes the hopes for the future that the participants have expressed and what they consider must be done so that the remembered events of violence are not repeated (timeline and quilts).

The facilitator asks: today the word ‘reparation’ is frequently mentioned. When you hear that word, what comes to mind?

The answers are written down in the paper, summarized, and the various forms of reparations are reviewed (appendix 5), and how the construction of historical memory from the perspective of the regions and victims is part of a form of historical repair is presented.

The participants discuss in groups:

What recommendations should be made so that this is not repeated?

What can be done so that these proposals and recommendations are visible?

Each group presents/displays their recommendations and these are registered on the butcher paper.

In this final activity ask groups to work on their collective agendas regarding historical clarification and reparations and to formulate a series of recommendations.

Final round of comments.

The facilitator closes, thanking the participants.

## 11. INTERVIEWS

Interviews, a conversation among two or more people with one of them asking questions that elicit information memories or opinions, allow us to gather testimony about one or several specific events. These memories can be of their experience, for example, as a combatant in one of the armed groups or their survival strategies as civilians in the middle of the war, or their initiatives to resist the war. Interviews can

also be done to learn how people evaluate the contexts and historical processes surrounding violent events or acts of resistance.

To write a report that includes the different voices and perspectives of victims we suggest that both in the selection of who to interview as well as during the interview you take into account differences such as class, race, generation, gender, and sexual orientation, and the ways in which violence affects and is experienced differently by different people, and how this also shapes their answers and ways of remembering.

Interviews, as a way of enabling deeper and more intimate conversations, are an important way to hear, facilitate, and validate accounts of those aspects of memory, emotions, or stories that tend to be silenced or not developed because they are outside of what are socially considered to be significant or acceptable memories.

### INTERVIEWING VICTIMS

A sequence suggested for these interviews is:

#### 1: Reconstruction of the past (memory of the facts of the violence)

What happened? In your own words, what happened? How did it happen? Who were they? Why did this happen? What did they do to and to whom? (Women, men, young people, LGBT people, ethnic groups).

Who did it affect and how? How did this affect you as a woman/young person/leader/indigenous person? How did this affect your community-group-family? How did you live through this? How did you, or do you, feel about this?

#### 2. Evaluation of the impact of the event

How did you face what happened? What did you do after what happened?

What changed after what happened? Who did it change?

What personal, family and community losses did it cause? What significant economic, cultural, emotional, and spiritual damages did it generate?

### 3. Perspective on the future

Who are you after what happened? What makes coexistence difficult today? What do you think needs to be done so that this is not repeated? What are your hopes for the future? What are your demands?

#### Consent to participate in interviews

Before carrying out the interview it is suggested that the interviewed person be informed of the objectives of the interview, their rights as an interviewee, and the possible emotional impact of reconstructing memory. We recommend that the interviewee be asked to sign a consent form before starting the interview, or if circumstances do not allow for this (security, mistrust, level of education), verbal consent be recorded.

The material developed in Guatemala for the REMHI project (the Inter-diocesan Project for the Recovery of Historical Memory, *Proyecto Interdiocesano de Recuperación de Memoria Histórica*) offers a series of recommendations and suggestions of how to conduct an interview to support the reconstruction of historical memory. What follows is a short summary of their suggestions.

#### ATTITUDE OF THE INTERVIEWER

The work of the interviewer is important and delicate, and requires preparation. It requires listening with great attention and gathering testimony from people with respect for their experience, language, and manner of speaking.

The interviewer has to make the person feel welcome and comfortable, help them express their experience, and faithfully gather their testimony. As such, the interviewer should:

Prepare a suitable location, with sufficient privacy so that the interviewee can be calm and assured that their testimony will be confidential.

Concentrate on listening to the testimony of the person and try to help them express themselves, but without asking too many questions. A calm attitude and looking at the person attentively will help to create this environment.

At all times it is important that the interviewer not judge the person, treat them as a “poor thing”, or be scared by their story. The interviewee should be treated with understanding.

After the interviews, if the interviewee has requested confidentiality, the interviewer should keep the identity of the narrator completely secret.

The practice of active listening, paying attention to both verbal and non-verbal communication to establish a relationship of trust with the person contribute to a stronger communication and interaction.

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#### **SOME BASIC POINTS REGARDING THE ATTITUDE OF THE INTERVIEWER**

- Use simple words and body language that conveys understanding, interest, and respect. Treat the interviewee in a friendly and affectionate way according to local cultural convention.
- Ask the questions calmly. Take care not to turn it into an interrogation. The questions are there to help get and structure the information. For example: And how was that? Who participated? What else happened? The questions can help make the testimony more specific and help the person speak about themselves. For example: How did you live through this? What consequences did it have for you?
- Help the person, insofar as possible, speak about themselves and their feelings and not only about the objective facts. If this is not possible, after finishing the testimony, leave a space to speak with the person about how they feel and to try to offer them support.

- Support them to analyze the reality of what happened and how they feel about it (how can feelings such as guilt, anger, etc be reinterpreted?).
- Control your reactions so as to not block communication. Avoid treating the victim as sick, or showing disbelief of what you hear, or making assessments about people.

### DIFFICULT SITUATIONS IN INTERVIEWS

If the person does offer specific information or the interview wanders, try to focus the interview using the question guide. If this happens be sure to note it in the summary of the interview. If the person is uncollaborative or manipulative the interviewer should try to concentrate on the interview and not get nervous. Focus on the subject and do not give the interviewee more information than normal.

If the person freezes up because they don't want to share some fact or are afraid of the interviewer, have patience, ask, and encourage the person while also respecting their right to not speak. If they are affected by the memories, leave time for the person to recover and then ask them if they want to continue.





# Glossary

**Actor:** a person who participates in an event and assumes a particular role in the face of it.

**Agent:** a person or group who acts and whose actions triggered events and decisions by others.

**Chronology:** a sequence of relevant events that are ordered in time.

**Citizen:** the political identity that we assume when we belong to a democratic community that is founded on principles of equality, freedom and solidarity. Today citizenship is understood as a political identity that is expressed both in the public and private sphere, and which is founded on principles of mutual respect, reciprocity, and adhesion to dialogue as the way to handle conflicts, either through promoting consensus or clearly but non violently stating oppositions. The condition of citizenship requires respectful treatment of differences and conflicts.

**Discrimination:** different and unfair treatment of a certain group of people or of an individual based on prejudices such as class, religion, race, gender, age, physical ability, marital status, or sexual orientation.

**Dissent:** ways of acting that express disagreement with a way of seeing the world or conceiving of order.

**Epic:** a tale of people, places and events that tells the story as one of heroes and winning or losing deeds.

**Exclusion:** the political act by which the rules of the game are defined such that the access of certain individuals and groups to political economic or symbolic resources is impeded.

**Heterogeneous:** made up of parts or members that are each different.

**Human rights:** the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 in recognition of the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family. Human rights are a common ideal whose recognition and universal and effective application should be promoted to peoples as well as nations and Member States in the territories under their jurisdiction. Colombia for example contemplates human rights in the National Constitution, and obliges the State to guarantee them. Title II, Chapter 1, "Fundamental rights" includes the right to life, freedom, equality, privacy, free development of personality, freedom of religion and conscience, honour, labour, academic freedom, due process, public expression, freedom of association, and political participation, among others.

**Imprint:** the mark or trace that one person leaves on another person or event.

**Impunity:** a situation where the State does not apply due process and other procedures as set forth in the law for the exercise of justice, be this due to incapacity, omission or complicity.

**Individual:** the liberal thought that was triumphant in the democratic revolutions of the nineteenth century associated the concept of an individual to one gender, social status and race and transformed this category, not into a universal and inclusive formula, but rather into a mechanism of exclusion and subordination. From this perspective 'individual' was not synonymous with 'human being', but with a particular sort of person: male, legal, tax payer, property owner and married. Its use then served to exclude women, Afro-descendent and indigenous people, LGBT people, and the dispossessed of the rights associated with full citizenship.

**Institution:** a social or state organization that responds to formal and informal rules of the game.

**International Humanitarian Law (IHL):** a set of rules that, for humanitarian reasons, tries to limit the effects of armed conflict. It protects people who are not, or are no longer, involved in the fighting, and limits the means and methods of warfare. IHL applies in cases of armed conflict and is required of all actors.

**Interpretive frameworks:** mental templates with which we understand, interpret and classify social and political reality and construct notions of justice and duty. Interpretive frameworks are products of political, social and symbolic relations, and lead to disputes among actors.

**Legitimacy:** attribute of justice or truth that we assign to certain behaviours that we are willing to accept and replicate. In politics legitimacy is understood as a concept designed to assess the quality and type of relationship established between rulers and ruled.

**Mediators:** individuals or groups that mediate and establish bridges between social and political networks so as to influence versions of the past or certain events.

**Narratives:** stories and ways of telling a story that connect and give meaning to a sequence of events, places and people.

**Polarization:** a social process by which group members confront members of another group as enemies, to the point that they end all possibility of reaching agreements and negotiations.

**Residential schools:** “For over a century, generations of Aboriginal children were separated from their parents and raised in overcrowded, underfunded, and often unhealthy residential schools across Canada. They were commonly denied the right to speak their language and told their cultural beliefs were sinful. Some students did not see their parents for years. Others - the victims of scandalously high death rates - never made it back home” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012).

**Rights-bearing subject:** social entity or person who can claim and use the rights they are entitled to as citizens and as human beings.

**Social Order:** patterns or regularities in which the relations between individuals and groups are inscribed at a given time, and from which a certain distribution of the economic political and symbolic resources of a society is established. These patterns in the distribution of resources produce hierarchies, inequalities, inclusions and exclusions. These distribution patterns affect public and private spheres (family, domestic, personal).

**Stigmatize:** to define a person or group by a negative characteristic. This characteristic is seen as inherent to their identity. For example, women are sometimes imputed to be emotional and intuitive, characteristics that become stigmatizing when, because they are considered emotional and intuitive they are denied the ability to be rational and able to participate in public debate and in politics.

**Symbolic representations:** figures, images or ideas that individuals and groups build to communicate to others and make sense of their experience and emotions in the face of a set of events.

**Victim:** In Colombia the term victim is legally defined as “a person who individually or collectively has suffered direct damage such as temporary or permanent injury resulting in physical disabilities, mental and/or sensory impairment (visual and/or hearing), emotional suffering, economic loss or impairment of their fundamental rights” as “a result of actions that have violated the criminal code”, as well as such suffered by their immediate family (law 975). The March 14, 2001 Judgment of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights considers that “victims includes both direct victims and their families, without distinction between them or as to the degree of relationship or kinship, at least in regards to the acknowledgement of their status as victims of crime”.

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