

Using life histories to understand and support health systems and their resilience

***Fourth Global Symposium on Health Systems
Research, Vancouver***

Tuesday, November 15th 2016

Led by: Joanna Raven, LSTM

Introductions

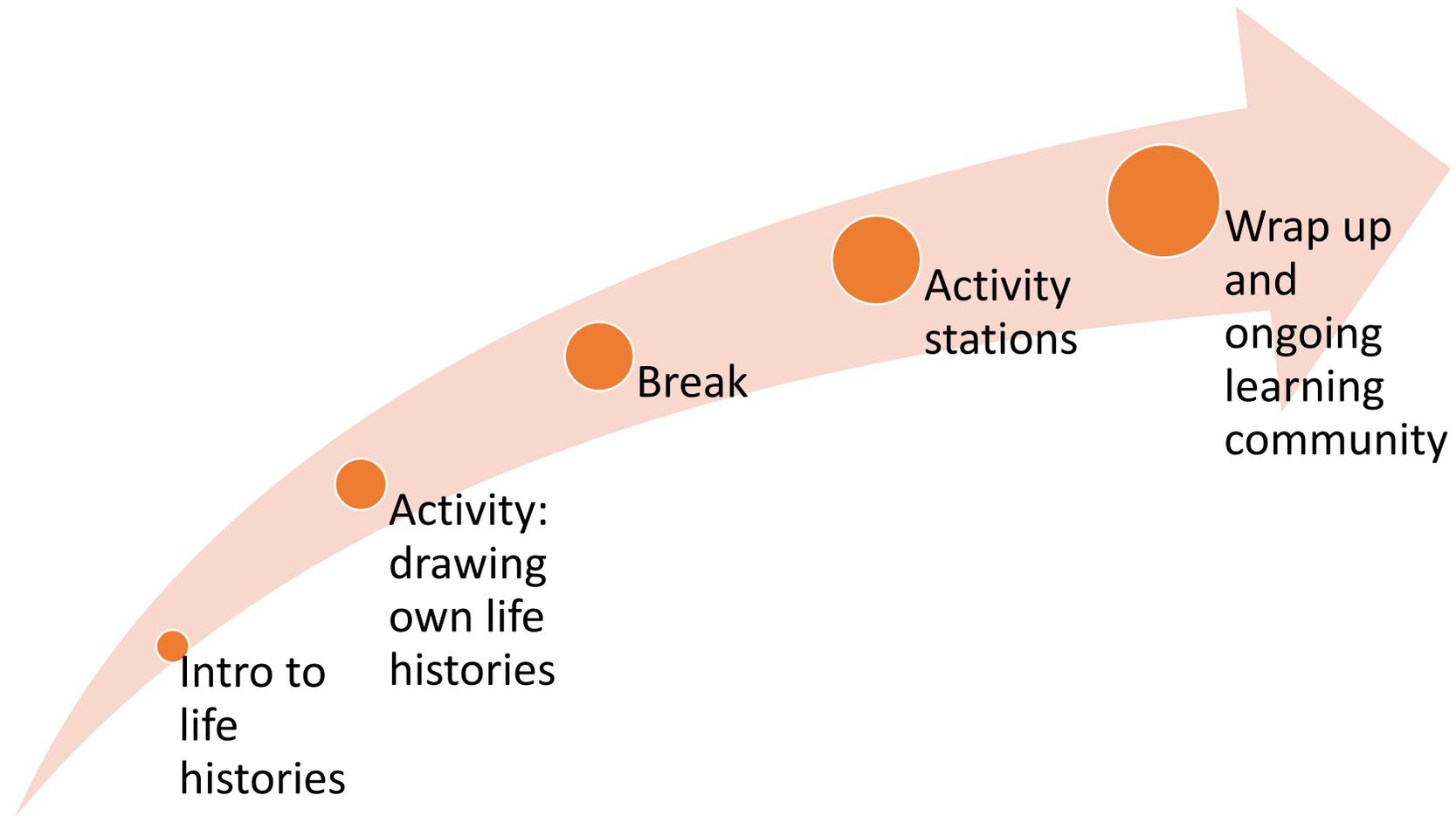


Aim of this session

- to share perspectives and resources on using life histories in health systems research



What we will do in this session



What is a life history?

- Qualitative method
- Aims to explore a person's life history through time, using a narrative approach
- Often used with visual aids: lifelines display events in chronological order and noting importance of events
- Different terms are used e.g. case history / study, critical incident narrative review, career / job history
- Often used in conjunction with other methods



Examples of using life history approach

- **Chronic poverty research** e.g. in Uganda, Tanzania and India – poverty trajectories of households overtime (Bird 2008; Kessy and Tarmo 2011; Benjamin 2004) assets, gender and poverty (Doss et al 2011)
- **Feminist and gender epistemologies** e.g. exploring experiences and perceptions that are often unheard (Ssali and Theobald 2016), capturing points of vulnerability that enhance gender inequity throughout lives of women involved in sex work (Mbonye et al. 2012)

Examples of using life history approach

- **Health research** e.g. Mental health (Chafetz 1996); exploring women's experience of living with HIV (Yajimaa et al. 2010)
- **Health systems research:** not widely used; but
 - used career histories to explore individual's career or professional trajectory and main work-related events in N Uganda, Sierra Leone, India (Namakula et al 2014; Wurie et al 2016; Kadam et al 2016; Purohit et al 2016);
 - health seeking behaviour in relation to health financing In Cambodia and Zimbabwe (Ros et al 2015; Buzuzi et al 2016)

Some examples of lifelines

Public, Female

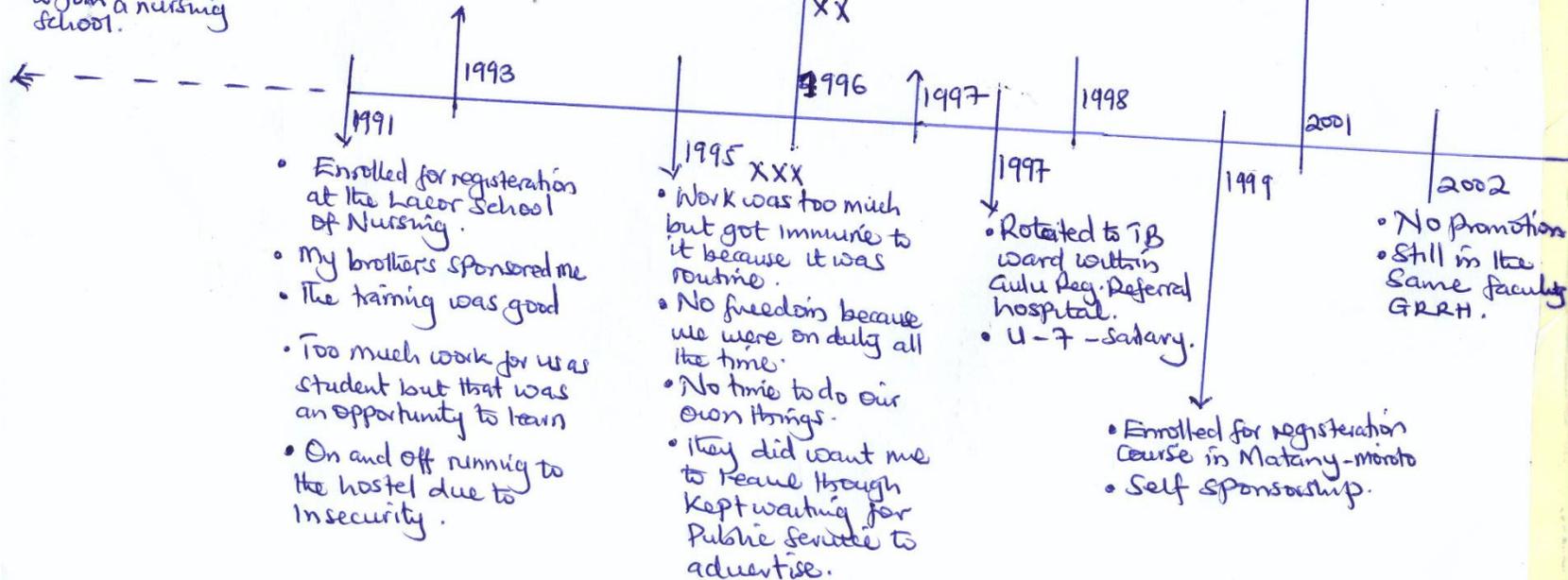
- My father wanted me to become a lawyer but was killed together with my mother by the rebels.
- Couldn't continue with senior six
- My brother advised me to join a nursing school.

- Completed the Nursing Course
- Retained to work in Lacor Hospital as a Reg. Nurse

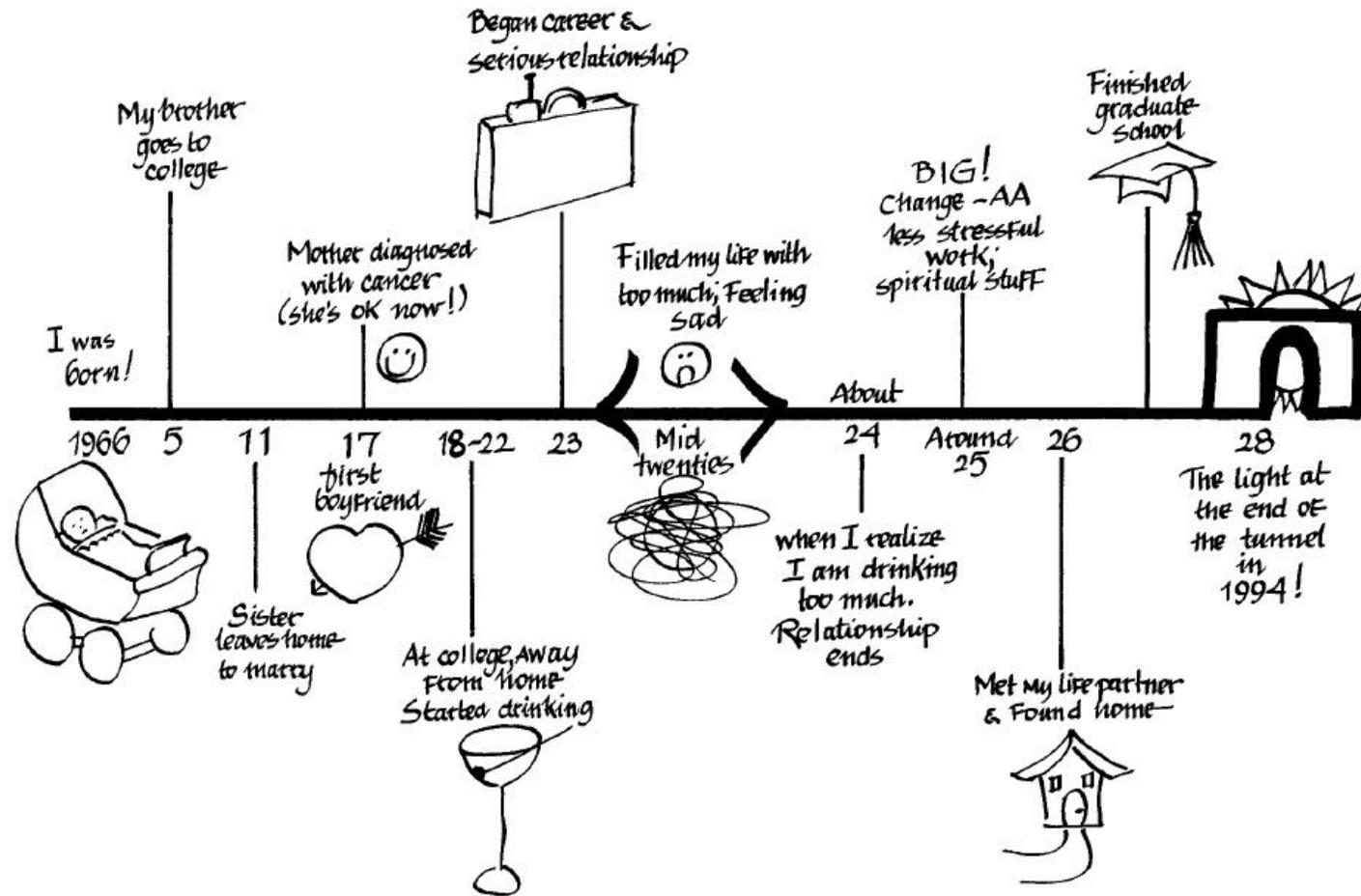
- Applied to Ministry of Health & got appointment letter on 8th may.
- Lacor Hospital refused to release me and give me the Certificate.
- Permanent Secretary help me to get the Certificate released.
- Posted to GRRH as enrolled nurse
- Salary U-7
- Worked in medical ward.

- Completed course and returned to GRRH
- No promotion
- Received the same Salary U-7 as an enrolled nurse
- Got married to the first husband.

- Rotated to surgical ward in GRRH
- Trained in counselling

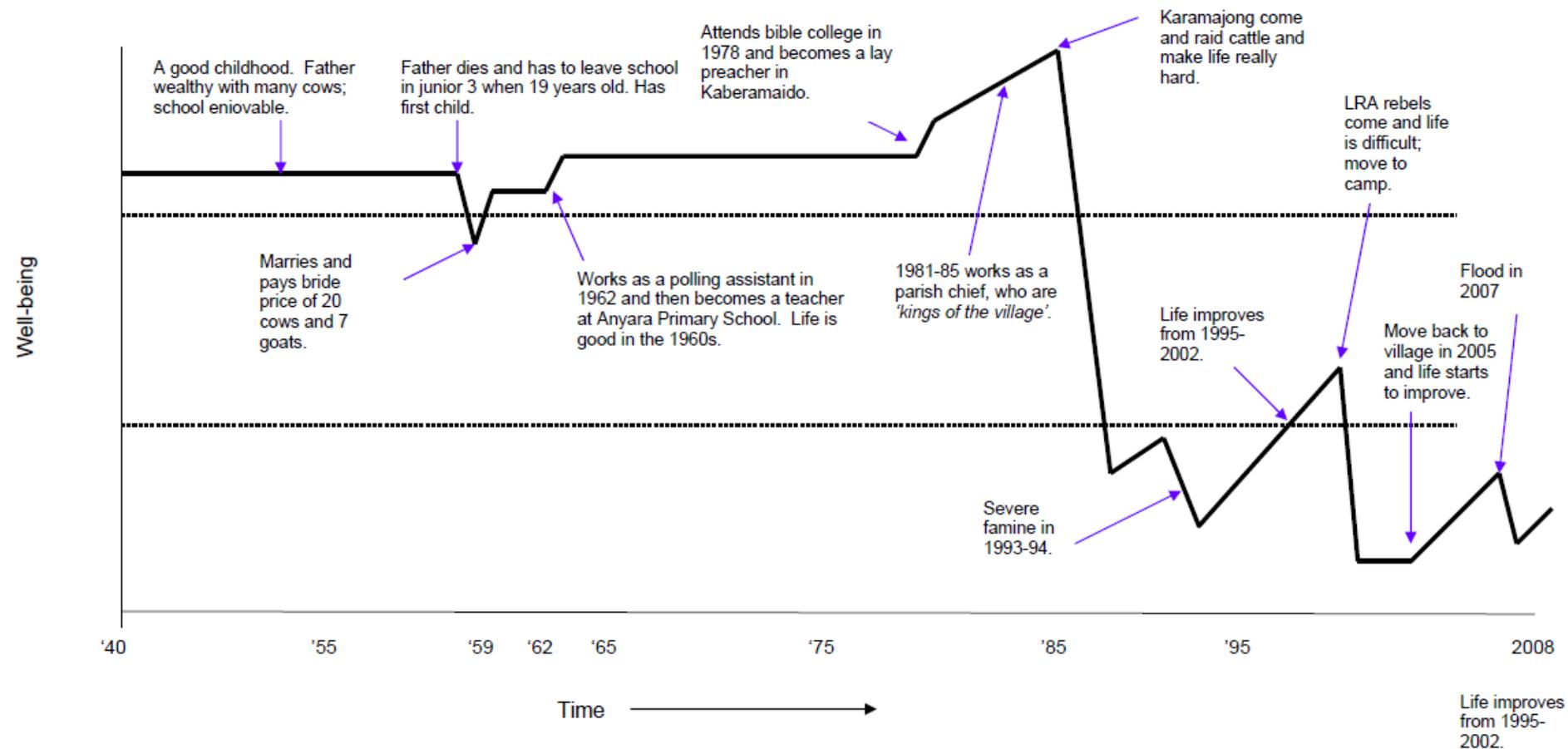


Example of a picture drawn in a life history



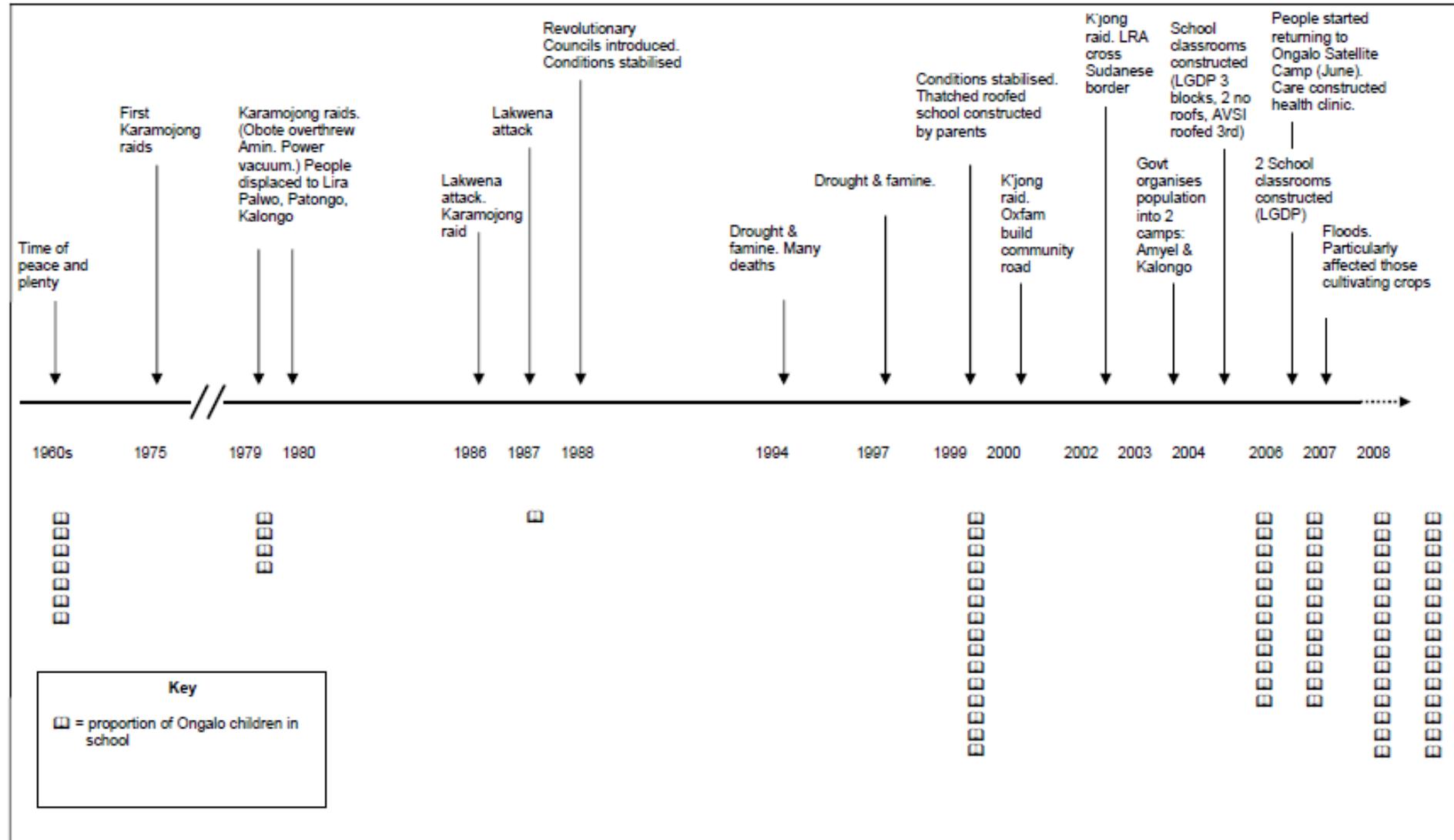
Using life history research as a part of a mixed methods strategy to explore resilience in conflict and post conflict settings (Bird 2008)

Figure 3: Okidi Matthew. Well-being map.



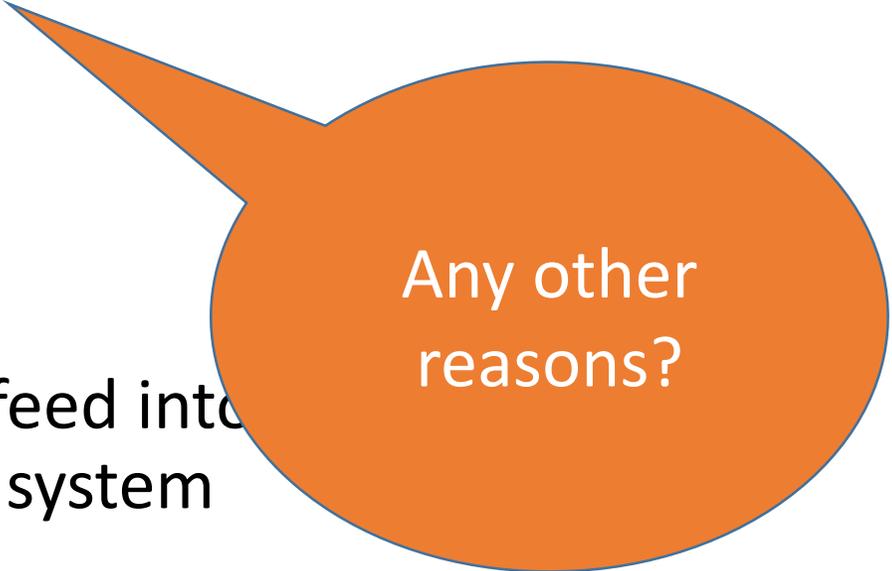
Historical timeline – Bird 2008

Figure 1d: Summary historical timeline with proportion of children in school, Ongalo, Pader District, 1960 - 2008



Why use life histories to support resilient and responsive health systems

- Place people at the centre of the research
- Experiences and realities of people need to feed into supporting a resilient and responsive health system
- Useful in contexts where there is a lack of formal data
- People may have experienced multiple traumatic events - important to rebuilding process



Any other reasons?



Countries & partners: Sierra Leone (COMAHS), Cambodia (CDRI), Northern Uganda (MUSPH) & Zimbabwe (BRTI)

UK partners: Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine and Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh

Research: Investigate how health systems had been rebuilt post-conflict through the lenses of experiences of both households and health workers, including their gendered experiences

Life histories in ReBUILD

Communities:

- To capture health related experiences of adults from poor households and their health seeking experiences through time

Health workers:

- To explore older health workers' perceptions and experiences of their working environment, how it has evolved and factors which encouraged or discouraged them from staying in post in remote areas and being productive
- To explore older health workers' posting and their perceptions of the factors that led to these job moves



Activity:

Challenging ourselves to do a life history

- **Individual activity: draw your own life or career history (30 minutes):**
 - You can choose what you want to put on – can make it up, or draw on what you know about other people, or do your own
 - Only disclose what you feel comfortable with
 - Confidentiality is key – what is said / written /drawn in this session – should remain in this session
- **Discuss in pairs (30 minutes):**
 - Walk through the life history with the other person
 - Discuss how it was to draw this life history

Plenary discussion

- What is useful about this method?
- What did you find challenging?
- How would you apply this method in your work?
- What are some of the ethical concerns?

Break

Stations

Reflections

- Reflections from the facilitators at the stations
- Reflections from the participants

The learning community

Introducing Global Health Social Science



Enabling research by sharing knowledge

<https://globalhealthsocialscience.tghn.org>

www.theglobalhealthnetwork.org

Global Health Social Science

A new online learning resource focused on **qualitative and participatory research methods** which is facilitated through the Global Health Network in association with RINGs, COUNTDOWN and ReBUILD.



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Global Health Social Science website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Global Health Network logo, an email input field, a password input field, a 'LOG IN/REGISTER' button, and a 'MORE' dropdown menu. Below this is a large orange banner with the text 'Global Health Social Science' on the left and a search bar on the right with the placeholder text 'What are you looking for?' and a 'SEARCH' button. The main content area features a large photograph of a diverse group of people, including women and children, in a community setting. A copyright notice in the bottom right corner of the photo reads '©2010 Charlie Hopkinson courtesy of RESYST'. Below the photo is a dark navigation menu with the following items: Home, About This Site, Qualitative and Participatory Research Methods, Articles, Community, Social Sciences Useful Resources, and Contact Us. The 'Home' item is currently selected. Below the navigation menu, the word 'Home' is displayed in a large, bold font. Underneath, a paragraph of text reads: 'Global Health Social Science is an open access collaborative forum for anyone working in global health and using qualitative and participatory research methods. We aim to provide a space to facilitate dialogue, share new resources and reflect on practice.'

The community is:

- Free for anyone to join, regardless of place, job role, etc
- Participatory: anyone can contribute materials and experiences
- Overseen by expert groups to ensure high quality information
- Contains many free resources, with more being added all the time
- Part of The Global Health Network (links to many other helpful research tools, ethics networks, eLearning courses, etc – all free and open access)

Social Sciences Sessions x Session 1: Introducing re x

https://globalhealthsocialscience.tghn.org/qualitative-and-participatory-research-methods/session-one-introducing-research-paradigms/

THE GLOBAL HEALTH NETWORK

Global Health Social Science

What are you looking for? SEARCH

Home About This Site Qualitative and Participatory Research Methods Articles Community Social Sciences Useful Resources Contact Us

Social Sciences Sessions

Session 1: Introducing research paradigms

This session provides an introduction to basic theory. A basic understanding of theory is important because:

- inform the type of information you need
- identify individuals and groups from whom you need information
- the methods you use and how you can use them
- how you analyse the findings
- how you justify your findings, and whether research is worth the effort

Qualitative research has at times been accused of being subjective. These differences are explored and overall the key differences are:

- To give meaning to the terms "paradigm", "epistemology", "methodology", "method"
- To identify the main characteristics of a positivist/quantitative research paradigm

You can download the [powerpoint here](#) and some other resources.

Recommended introductory reading:

Kitto, S. C., J. Chesters and C. Grbich (2008). "Quality of qualitative research: a review of the literature"

Session1qualppt

https://tghn.org/site_media/media/medialibrary/2015/04/Session1qualppt.pdf



Epistemology

- Epistemology is:
- 'The study of what constitutes knowledge. It is concerned with providing a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate' (Maynard, 1994:10, in Madge et al., 1997, p. 86 in Qualitative Research Glossary, 2003)



- Learning sessions with ppt and useful resources

Useful guidance articles and resources

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Global Health Social Science

What are you looking for?

[Home](#) [About This Site](#) [Qualitative and Participatory Research Methods](#) [Articles](#) [Community](#) [Social Sciences Useful Resources](#) [Contact Us](#)

Sept. 23, 2016

Using Gender Analysis within Qualitative Research

By Research in Gender and Ethics (RiGs)

Gender analysis entails researchers seeking to understand gender power relations and norms and their implications, including the nature of women's, men's, and people of other gender's lives, how their needs and experiences differ, the causes and consequences of these differences, and how services and policies and people of s differences gender in location,

and people of s differences gender in location,

research process. It the development interpretation it gender engage in

is research,

USEFUL RESOURCES

[How to Do Gender Analysis Within Qualitative Research](#) 1.6 MB

RELATED ARTICLES

[Qualitative Methods for International Health Intervention Research](#)
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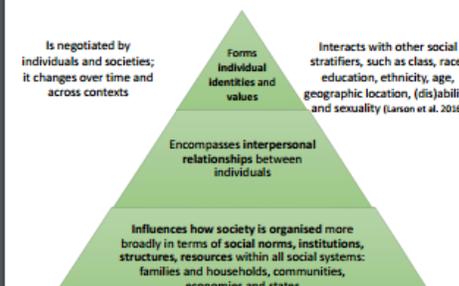
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Defined as the "socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women" and people of other genders (WHO 2015)

Gender operates on various levels simultaneously



Is negotiated by individuals and societies; it changes over time and across contexts

Forms individual identities and values

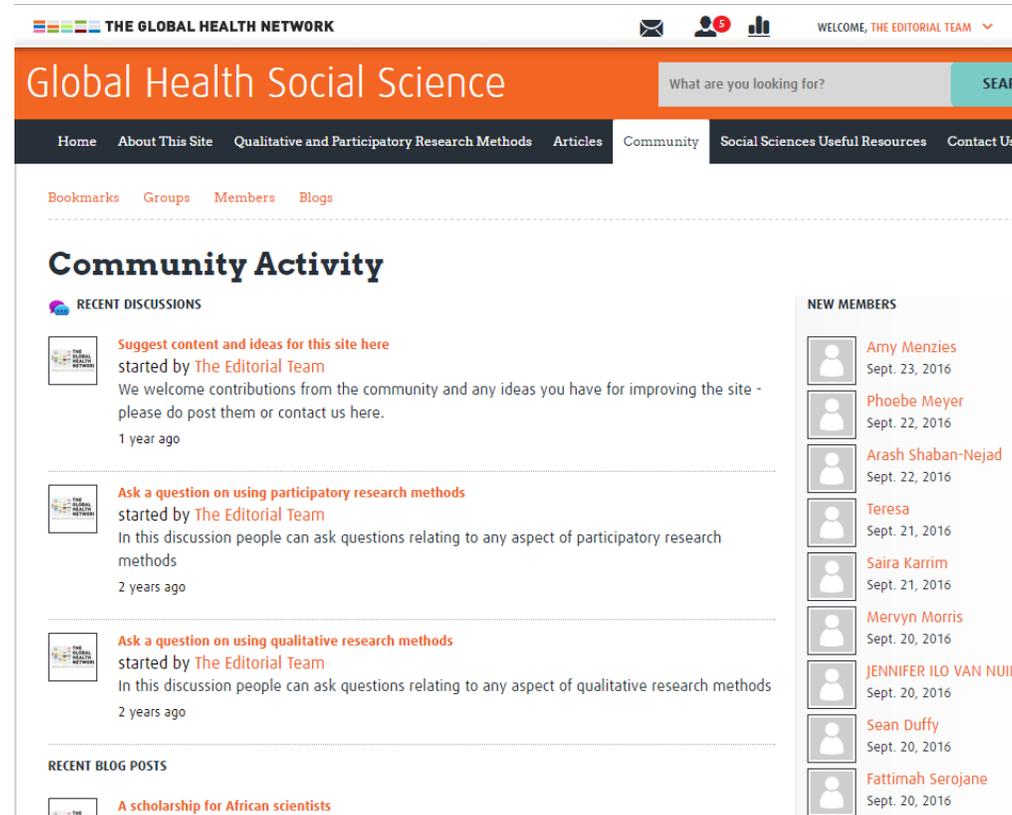
Interacts with other social stratifiers, such as class, race, education, ethnicity, age, geographic location, (dis)ability, and sexuality (Larson et al. 2016)

Encompasses interpersonal relationships between individuals

Influences how society is organised more broadly in terms of social norms, institutions, structures, resources within all social systems: families and households, communities, economies and states

Blogs and community discussion forums

- Helping researchers connect and share experiences
- Users can also share useful information about courses, events, training, job opportunities, funding, etc



The screenshot shows the 'Global Health Social Science' website. The header includes the site name, navigation links (Home, About This Site, Qualitative and Participatory Research Methods, Articles, Community, Social Sciences Useful Resources, Contact Us), and a search bar. The main content area is titled 'Community Activity' and features three recent discussions:

- Suggest content and ideas for this site here** started by **The Editorial Team**. We welcome contributions from the community and any ideas you have for improving the site - please do post them or contact us here. 1 year ago.
- Ask a question on using participatory research methods** started by **The Editorial Team**. In this discussion people can ask questions relating to any aspect of participatory research methods. 2 years ago.
- Ask a question on using qualitative research methods** started by **The Editorial Team**. In this discussion people can ask questions relating to any aspect of qualitative research methods. 2 years ago.

Below the discussions is a 'RECENT BLOG POSTS' section with one post: **A scholarship for African scientists**.

On the right side, there is a 'NEW MEMBERS' list:

- Amy Menzies (Sept. 23, 2016)
- Phoebe Meyer (Sept. 22, 2016)
- Arash Shaban-Nejad (Sept. 22, 2016)
- Teresa (Sept. 21, 2016)
- Saira Karrim (Sept. 21, 2016)
- Mervyn Morris (Sept. 20, 2016)
- JENNIFER ILO VAN NUIL (Sept. 20, 2016)
- Sean Duffy (Sept. 20, 2016)
- Fattimah Serrojane (Sept. 20, 2016)

Linked to other useful areas of TGHN

- Guidance on numerous other areas of research such as ethics, community engagement etc
- Thousands of downloadable tools and templates
- Very popular eLearning centre and CPD scheme (free!)
- Database of research regulatory standards around the world
- Interactive database of research sites and studies
- Process map for research initiation
- News, funding, events and competitions



Short Courses Modular Courses

e-Learning Courses

Research Ethics Introduction & Course Overview

14% complete

Research Ethics Introduction & Course Over

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This Course (
CONTENT NAVI



Summary

- A useful method for health systems research
- But challenging:
 - Sensitive topics - importance of building trust and confidence
 - Reluctance to expose very personal information
 - Willingness to draw lifelines
 - Confidentiality – issues of disclosure particularly with lifelines
 - Time intensive

“Life histories build on one of the most essentially human characteristics – telling stories and making sense of the world through our own life experiences. They have potential to contribute to health systems research.”
(Witter et al. forthcoming)





Research for stronger health systems post conflict

Thank you

Website:

www.rebuildconsortium.com

Contact:

Joanna.raven@lstmed.ac.uk



@ReBUILDRPC