

Social Mapping

Introduction

In this exercise, participants are asked to identify what they consider to be sources of social and institutional support within their community. Participants are also encouraged to consider social and gender status in relationship to access to resources.

This activity is also a good way for development workers to obtain valuable information on resources that are already present in the community, as well as get a sense of what additional resources might be needed; this information will help them to design community interventions.

Objective

■ Participants will explore how social status may determine a person's mobility and access to community resources.

Timeframe: 1 ½ – 2 hours

Materials needed: flipchart paper or large pieces of paper you can post on a wall; colored markers; pencils/pens

Ideal workspace: large enough space for all participants to see and write on the paper

Number of participants: 10-15 (if more participants are present, break them into smaller groups and have them create multiple maps)

STEP 1

If participants are not already acquainted, ask them to introduce themselves.

Describe the activity, its purpose, and how it will work.

Remind participants that this is a group learning exercise, and that it is not necessary for everyone to agree on everything. However, everyone in the group deserves respect. Participants should refrain from judging, interrupting or ridiculing others, and should respect the privacy of others by maintaining confidentiality.

Distribute markers to all participants.

Although some staff members had spent years in the field, many said that social mapping helped them understand communities better than ever before.

Many were also surprised at the gap between their perceptions of communities and what the exercise revealed.

“We saw our communities in a different light and noticed hidden characteristics that led to exploitation and poverty.”



Sarah Kambou/ICRW

STEP 2

Ask participants to work together to draw a map of their community. If they have never seen a map, explain that you are asking them to imagine how their community would look to someone flying over it, and draw that image on the paper or on the ground.

Some participants may not be accustomed to using a writing utensil, so encouragement and patience are needed. One alternative is to clear an area of dirt or sand and ask people to create a map using objects found in nature, such as rocks, sticks or grass.

Reassure the participants that things do not have to be drawn exactly – the map is only to get a general idea of what the community looks like.

Ask the participants to draw all of the resources in the community. Explain that “resources” are buildings, organizations, people, or services that are available to the community when they are needed. “Resources” can mean: roads, houses, health facilities (health posts, pharmacies, hospitals, clinics etc.), schools, religious buildings or leaders, water wells, public baths, markets, schools, factories, rivers, trees, midwives, social workers, teachers, doctors, etc. Ask them to identify the various community resources by name or with a symbol (or an object, like a twig, if maps are made on the ground).

Ask participants to mark where different groups in the community live (i.e. the wealthy, the laborers, different religious groups, different ethnic groups, original settlers, people who arrived later, etc.). If they are not mentioned in the groups of people identified by the community, ask about sex workers and where they live.

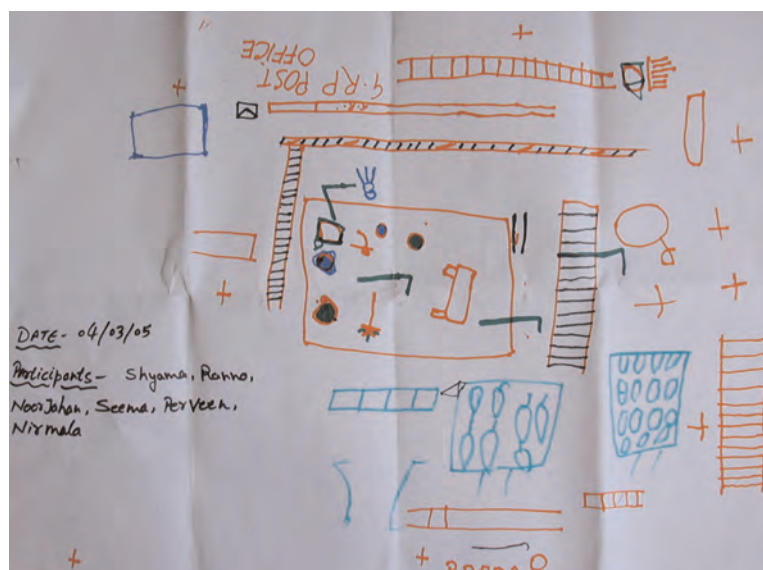
Be careful not to direct what is being presented and how it is being presented.

“When we talked about exclusion – gender and class – we now know it’s active exclusion. We used to assume it was passive exclusion, blaming it on the beneficiaries because they are lazy.”

CARE staff member, India



Deepmala Mahla/CARE



Sarah Kambou/ICRW

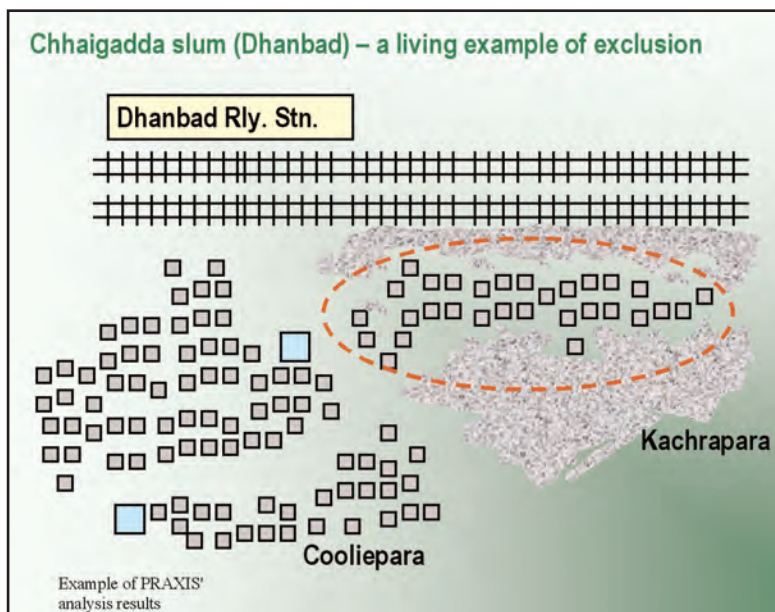
STEP 3

Lead a group discussion about the map that explores issues of mobility and access to resources.

Ask probing questions to draw out more information from the map(s). If more than one map was drawn, point out similarities and differences among them. Facilitate a discussion with the group. You can use the following questions to guide you.

Guiding Questions

- Are you surprised by the amount of resources in your community? Are there more or fewer than you had thought?
- Which places or resources can be visited by anyone in the community?
- Are there any places or community resources that certain people might feel uncomfortable or unsafe visiting or using? Can you identify these places and resources on the map?
- Do you think there is a difference between what men experience in some places and what women experience in the same places?
- Does a person's caste, gender, ethnicity, age, or educational level determine the places they can go in the community? Does a person's caste, gender, ethnicity, age, or educational level affect how they are received or treated in different places?
- How do class, caste, religion, gender, age and disability influence a person's mobility or access to resources within the community?
- Within the community, how does a person's sexual reputation affect their mobility and their access to resources? Why?
- Whose mobility is generally more restricted? Whose mobility is generally less restricted? Why is the mobility of some restricted while the mobility of others is not?
- How can the restriction of mobility be harmful?
- Would you like to change the situation you've described? What can you do as an individual? What can you and others do in your community to change the situation?



As staff in India dug deeper through social mapping exercises, issues of social exclusion arose. For instance, they found that members of “lower” castes (circled in red in map, right) were denied access to clean drinking water, which meant they had to get water from unhygienic sources such as stagnant ponds. The negative health implications were enormous. CARE staff members realized they had only been working in areas surrounding clean water sources (pale blue boxes in map, right), so they had really only been working with people in “higher” castes.