

PLA

Exercise 6

Women's Mobility Mapping

Introduction

In this exercise, participants explore the connection between social status, gender, sexuality and mobility. Participants are asked to identify the things, persons, or places in and outside of their community that influence their mobility, as well as their access to and use of services.

We have found it useful to complete this exercise following the 'Social Mapping' exercise. Doing so allows participants to use the community map drawn during the 'Social Mapping' exercise to clearly and easily identify places in their community that are either restricted or open to them, and that may make them feel powerful or vulnerable. Vulnerable means feeling powerless, small, insecure, at risk, or frightened. It will be useful to clarify who in the community may feel more restricted in movement than others.

As you will recall from various activities in the "What Do We Know About Gender and Sexuality? Introductory Exercises," a woman's social status can be closely linked to the community's perception of her sexuality. Often, a woman's reputation as "chaste" or "pure" represents not only her own honor but also that of her family. A woman leaving home unaccompanied by her male family members may risk her own life or safety, simply because her reputation as a sexually pure woman is questioned. These exercises are designed to challenge the common social stereotype that a woman's public reputation as sexually pure is more important than a man's sexual reputation; participants will also analyze how a woman's sexual reputation impacts on her ability to leave her home.

This exercise can be done with either men or women, but we have found that it works best in single-sex groups.



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Objective

■ Participants will analyze the connections between gender, sexuality, mobility, and access to services in their community.

Timeframe: 1 ½ – 2 hours

Materials needed: colored markers or pens, flipchart paper

Ideal workspace: a private, safe space, such as someone's home

Number of participants: 3-5 women

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.

STEP 2

Spread out a map that was drawn during the social mapping exercise, if one is available.

Alternatively, ask participants to draw a rough sketch of their community (this should only take about five minutes), either on a large piece of paper or with sticks on a patch of space on the bare earth. It does not have to be detailed or accurate, as long as it gives a sense of where the boundaries and important landmarks in the community are. If literacy is an issue in your group, ask participants to use sticks, stones and other objects to represent different places in the community.

Ask the participants to discuss and decide on places or situations in the community where women can:

1. Go unaccompanied without the permission of her husband, father, or other male relative.
2. Go unaccompanied with the permission of her husband, father, or other male relative.
3. Go accompanied without the permission of her husband, father, or other male relative.
4. Go accompanied with the permission of her husband, father, or other male relative.
5. Go for an extended period of time (e.g. visit to her family's home).

Designate one or two of the women to be responsible for representing the places or situations that are being agreed upon by the group. Try to get a sense of which places everyone agrees on, and which places create some disagreement.

As the women are discussing, use the guiding questions provided below to probe deeper.

After the map has been completed, ask participants how freely people can go to the different places illustrated on the map (i.e. streets, religious buildings, schools, markets, homes, etc.). Based on their answers, they can draw symbols (i.e. small triangles, circles, stars, etc.) or mark in each of the places identified on the map, what type of person is freely able to move in that area (i.e. young unmarried men; young unmarried women; widowed women; widowed men; mothers-in-law; married women; divorced women; and women or men of different classes, castes, and ethnicities, depending on the context). The number of symbols drawn will represent the different groups in the community who can go to the different places identified on the map. For example, if married women are allowed to go to the market, this can be symbolized by a star in the marketplace.



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Next, you may want to also use symbols to indicate if these groups are allowed to go to these places with or without permission. Use a (+) to show those places on the map, where women can go without permission, and a (-) to show those places on the map where women can only go with permission.

Guiding Questions (to be used during the exercise)

- In this community, are people allowed to move about freely? What do others think if certain people leave their homes unaccompanied? Do some people feel unsafe moving around by themselves?
- Are men able to move about the community outside their homes freely? Why or why not?
- Which places in your community are men not allowed to go? Are some places restricted at some times and open at other times? Are certain men restricted more than others? Why or why not?
- Are women able to move about the community outside their homes freely? Why or why not?
- Which places in your community are women not allowed to go? Are some places restricted at some times and open at other times? Are certain women restricted more than others? Why or why not?
- Why does a woman's reputation change if she leaves her home unaccompanied? Is restricting women's mobility related to sex or "having sex"? Is it fair?
- Are expectations different for women of different classes, castes, religions, age, or marital status? Why?
- Do you think restriction of mobility harms women and their families? How?
- Would you like to change the situation you describe? What can you do as an individual? What can you and other members of the community do to change the situation? How can the project assist you and other community members in making this change?



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