



SOCIAL MAPPING

Why Do this?

When beginning to work in a new community or wanting to explore an existing community, it is important to understand its *assets, strengths, resources, and needs*. In addition, we need to understand how people living in the community are being impacted.

Mapping is an exercise that is used to gather information about a range of issues or areas of inquiry: from access to resources, to mobility or quality of life issues, to community census. With this approach, community members are asked to draw out their community, village or settlement and to identify important pieces of information (relative to the areas of inquiry). In social mapping, the primary concern is not drawing the community accurately or to scale, but rather with gathering useful information that informs whatever situation you are studying or wanting to learn from in the community.

The discussion that results from the creation of a social map helps community members themselves to reflect on their reality, which is a critical part of any transformative empowerment process.

Set-Up

1. Make sure participants have a minimum of 1 to 1.5 hours to complete the social map and report backs. This is a minimum, you may need to consider up 2hrs +.
2. **Be aware of power dynamics, and do what is necessary to minimize them. Thinking critically about who will be involved and what those relationships might be. However, depending on the areas of inquiry, you are encouraged to bring together different perspectives and experience, if appropriate.**
3. A map can be drawn on large pieces of paper using markers, on the back of big, dried leaves or drawn in the dirt; use whatever resources are at your disposal.
4. It is easier for participants to complete the activity if you provide instructions or tasks one step at a time.
5. Make sure someone (from your organization) has been identified to take notes during the group report-backs and discussion. Documentation is key.
6. **Read through the facilitation guide and documentation form before implementing. In fact, try it out with staff before working with participants. Make sure you understand the purpose of the activity, have a sense of how to implement, and what space, materials, and information is needed. Make it your own!**

How to do this?

- 1. BEFORE YOU GET STARTED:** Lay down sheets of paper on a table or on the ground or clear some space on the ground to work with leaves or dirt. Make sure all participants can see and draw out features on the map. Provide whatever materials are available such as markers, stickers, tape, paper, sticks, stones, leaves, or recycled materials, etc.
- 2. DELINEATE THE GEOGRAPHY:** Ask participants to draw out the neighborhood, village or community where you are working, as they perceived it. A good place to start might be to draw main geographic features (e.g. rivers, lakes, hills, mountains, etc.) and landmarks (e.g. major roads, churches, schools, clinics and hospitals, shops, etc.). (5 to 10 mins)
- 3. MAPPING INFORMATION NEEDS:** The focus of the social map is to have participants identify pieces of data key to your information needs. For example, if you wanted to explore quality of life issues or health, you would want participants to identify current conditions, access points, and perceptions across the community. Depending on your area of inquiry, possible questions to prompt the mapping of information might be:
 - *Where are the community's resources located? Where in the community do families access resources like water, food, education, etc. What areas in the community are most marginalized or have the fewest (or less access to) resources?*
 - *Where do families go for their healthcare (or education or leadership) needs? Where do people work or engage in income generating activities?*
 - *Where are people or groups in the community most affected by (whatever the issues might be – health, pollution, lack of mobility, lack of employment)? What are these problems?*
 - *What is access or mobility like in the community? Where do women and girls feel safest and less safe and why? Who are the most trusted leaders (formal or informal) in the community and where are they located?*

Have participant discuss these questions and draw out or place these elements on the map. (20-45mins)

- 4. INTERROGATING THE MAP:** When you have finished mapping key information needs, ask participants questions about what they see, what patterns might emerge, and what this means. For example, “*What do you see mapped out overall?*” “*What jumps out at you?*” “*Who is impacted the most? And who/what might be missing from this map and why?*” “*What does the map tell us about what the community's needs are and how we might address them?*” “*Who else should participate and contribute to this map and why?*” (20 mins).

DON'T FORGET TO DOCUMENT! Remember to record the important take-aways from this conversation and to take pictures of people working on the map (if you have consent) and of the final map.

- 5. COMPLETE THE DOCUMENTATION FORM:** At the end of the meeting, the facilitators should review what they heard and learned from the participants, review the notes that were taken, and [complete the Social Map Documentation Form](#).

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Documentation Form

Name of Organization and/or Program: _____

Location of Data Collection: _____

Date of Data Collection: _____ Data collected by: _____

Photographs Taken during Meeting? YES NO

STEP ONE - Summary of Who Participated in the Meeting?

1. # Participants:

In each box, please fill in the number of participants for each category.

2. Age (approx.): 18 & Under: _____ 19-25: _____ 26-35: _____ 35-50: _____ 50+: _____

3. Gender: Female: _____ Male: _____

Notes about participants (if needed):

STEP TWO - Summary of Information Shared Through Social Map

Write down the major themes in brief, bullet point form.

1. MAPPING INFORMATION NEEDS: Please briefly summarize...

What did the social mapping activity tell us about

Here, write down the questions or prompts used during the session to gather information from participants and write down the major themes or ideas that were shared. For example, "Where and how the community is accessing basic resource/services such as food, water, education, healthcare, etc."

2. What were the major themes or ideas that came out of the group’s discussion of the information that was mapped out (i.e. “interrogating the map” – what was mapped out overall, what was most surprising, who is most impacted & why, what else is needed, etc.)? What does this mean for the community and what else is needed? *Write down the major themes/ideas from the group discussion and include any quote(s) or key story that captures what was learned.*

4. Any other notes, quotes, stories, or thoughts/ideas that came out of the conversation that you want to mention or record? Anything important to mention about what else may have happened, taken place during the meeting? *Write down the major themes/ideas from the group discussion and include any quote(s) or key story that captures what was learned.*