

Natural Resources Map



To identify the natural resources within a community and to discuss changes in the availability and quality of such resources. Natural resources include hills, rivers, forests, agricultural fields, plantations, etc.

This tool generates strong community participation, as everyone can contribute something to the map.

Steps in the Process

1. Start by asking participants how they would define natural resources.
2. Explain that the group is going to construct a map on the ground, indicating the natural resources in the area. This might include trees, rivers, canals, ponds, etc. This might be done using locally-available materials (stones, sticks, bottle tops, etc collected at the beginning of the activity) or by drawing or writing on moveable cards. The map is likely to cover a large area to include places which the participants walk to in order to collect fuel-wood or water.
3. Start by indicating the main features of the village so that everyone can easily locate themselves.
4. When all is agreed, make a copy of the map on a large piece of paper.

Suggestions for Use

Resource maps can be used to:

- Explore the various resources located within a village
- Discuss how community members can manage these resources effectively

- Generate discussion about entitlement to these resources and problems associated with them
- Identify resources which could assist a community in times of disaster or reduce the impact of disasters
- Reflect on the past or future, looking at changes that have taken place or changes that community members would like to see in the future - past and future maps can be created to support this analysis.

Questions for Discussion

- Who collects wood / water?
- How much time is spent collecting wood / water?
- Is there more or less fuel-wood / water now than there used to be? Why?
- Do we have to walk further to collect wood / water than before?
- How safe do you feel when collecting wood / water?
- What different types of trees are there? What are their uses?
- Which trees are planted and which grow naturally?
- Whose responsibility is it to plant trees?
- Do women or men own trees, plant trees, tend trees, collect fruit, process fruit from trees?

Issues to be aware of

The map itself can sometimes become more important than the process that creates due to its graphic and colorful representation. It is therefore important not to neglect the participatory process involved in its creation and to listen to the discussions that take place, as important issues can come to light at this stage. In some communities, sensitivity around land issues makes it a difficult exercise – in such cases, facilitators need to plan the use of the tool carefully.

Resources

- Reflect Mother Manual, ActionAid International, 1996, p. 95.
- Village Book Training Manual, ActionAid Myanmar, 2014.