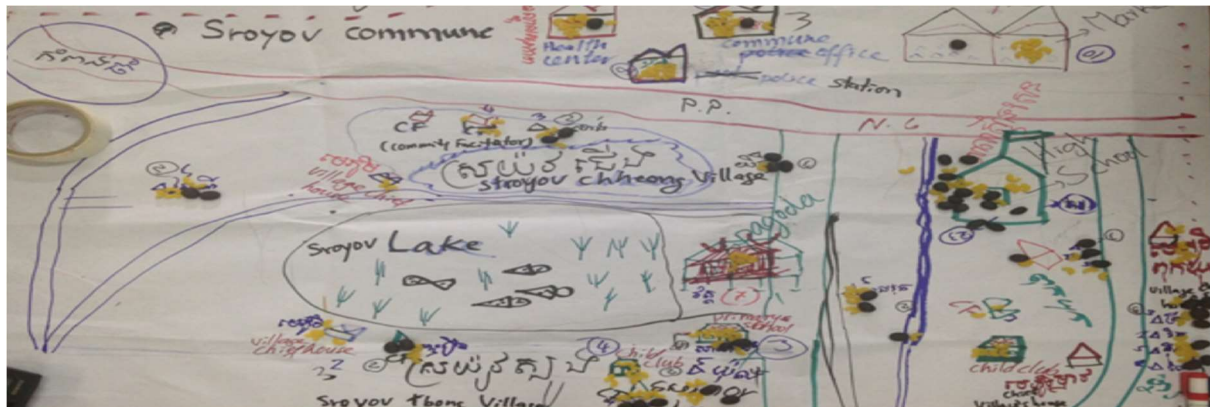


Community power map



To map spaces of power in a clear, visual way and presenting local information, problems and opportunities. A community map can be used to identify spaces in a local area where power occurs as well as understanding people's ability to access, participate in or influence those spaces.

Maps can be developed to show changes (before and after) over the years and to anticipate changes for the future (visioning).

- **Closed spaces:** Where elites such as politicians, bureaucrats, experts, bosses, managers and leaders make decisions behind closed doors with little or no consultation or involvement of others.
- **Invited spaces:** Spaces that are created and opened for consultation with sectors of the population who have historically been excluded.
- **Created spaces:** New spaces opened up to focus on citizen action and active participation.

For a more detailed explanation of closed, invited and created spaces of power, take a look at the [Spaces of Power](#) toolbox section in the Understanding Power Shifts toolbox.

Steps

1. Introduce each other, the theme and purpose of the exercise and required time. When discussing the purpose of the exercise, the facilitator should be clear how the information gathered will be used (for example for community reflection, to feed into monitoring and reporting processes, to inform PRRPs, to develop new strategies for action as a group). Groups

should be clear how they can use the information they will generate and how the organisation intends to use it.

2. Before beginning the exercise, the group may wish to discuss the scale of the map that they wish to draw to decide upon the right level of focus. The map may be at the community or village level or could also be used to represent wider spaces like towns. Take a walk around the area (community, a hamlet, village, etc.) to note the key features to represent and analyse.
3. Initially, a map should be created on a large scale on the floor or any large surface; so that all group members can actively contribute and clearly see what is going on.
4. Start the map with the most commonly known places/spaces, for example, the community centre or school or any other place where the group meets can be used as a starting point. Drawing the important features such as main roads and public buildings will help group members to orient themselves and therefore participate more actively.
5. Different materials can be used to represent the various elements of the map. These could be anything that is easily available and easy to move, such as sticks, stones, etc. Moveable objects are crucial, as everyone needs to be able to go back, change and add elements as the map develops. Less assertive group members find this particularly helpful.
6. Once all the physical things (houses, schools, community centre, clinic, local court, police stations, etc.) are mapped, and the group is happy with the representation of their locality, distribute 10 seeds to each member of the group. Ask them to think about the spaces where they have the most power or feel most empowered then ask them to distribute the seeds to rank the places where they hold the most power. Explain that they can put as many seeds as they like on a specific place (for example 7 on their own house and 2 at the school and 1 at the health centre).
7. Count up the number of seeds allocated to each place (but leave them on the map) and reflect with the group on where they feel most powerful and why. Also, explore the places where they feel least powerful and explore the reasons with the group. Make sure you ask different members of the group to share their thoughts and reflections.
8. To reflect upon the past, give each participant another 10 seeds (it is important they are of a different type) and ask them to repeat the exercise for a specific point in the past, for example, 5 years ago or before they started working with a particular programme or group. Tell participants to repeat the ranking exercise and place the seeds where they felt they had

most power at that time. Give participants the option of not using all their seeds if they feel that their relative power in the past was less than their power in the present.

9. Count and reflect upon the seeds allocated to each place to identify the places and spaces where participants felt most and least powerful in the past. Also, count any seeds that haven't been used as this will give a rough indication of how groups' perceptions of their own power have shifted. If participants felt more powerful in the past than they do now they may need more seeds.
10. At this point, it is a good idea to double check with participants that they are happy with how they have allocated seeds to the past and present and allow them to make any adjustments they feel are necessary. While using this tool in Cambodia, we found that participants only fully understood the concept of power in different spaces once we had started the discussion but were too shy to ask if they could change their vote.
11. Ask participants to explain the changes that have taken place that have given them more power between past and present and try to identify any triggers that led to those changes. During this reflection, it is useful to explore the concepts of closed, invited and claimed spaces to understand how participants have gained access to spaces that were previously closed to them and which spaces they have claimed or been invited to participate in.
12. Depending upon the enthusiasm and energy of the group, you could also repeat the ranking exercise for a third time asking participants to allocate their seeds according to which places and spaces they would like to have most power in the future and use the reflection space to discuss what changes need to happen for them to achieve this.
13. Make note of the scores for each place for each time (past, present, future) as these may provide a useful comparison in the future. Also keep a photographic record of the maps

Short version

If you don't have much time, it's possible to simplify the exercise. Instead of using the community maps for a ranking and scoring exercise as above you can ask groups to think about how each of the places on the map corresponds with the spaces of power presented above.

1. Follow steps 1-5 above to draw the community maps.

2. Introduce the concept of spaces of power with the group using the notes/example given at the start of this resource sheet.
3. Ask the group to choose different symbols for each of the spaces of power (closed, invited and claimed).
4. Using the map, ask the group to place the agreed symbols on each of the places identified in the map. Groups should discuss and share their real life experiences of accessing or influencing different places to guide the allocation of symbols.
5. Then the group can reflect on the maps as a whole, drawing our insights and conclusions to stimulate discussion.
6. In some cases (if desired), the “present” map may then be used as a starting point for developing a map from “past” showing past situations and the process of empowerment that has helped to create the current situation. The map can also be for future, an “ideal” or “visioning” map, showing future changes.
7. Photograph the map and conclude the discussion by thanking the group and discussing with them how they plan to use this information at the community level and briefly explain to them again how the organisation will use this information and analysis.

Guiding questions

The following questions can be used to guide and deepen the discussions. They are provided for guidance and can be adapted to the specific context in which you are applying this tool.

- Where are the places where you have most power?
- Why do you have more power in some places than in others?
- What changes (in yourself or your environment) have enabled you to gain more access and power in certain spaces?
- What closed, invited and claimed spaces are identified?
- What experience does the group have of participating in / accessing invited spaces?
- What experience does the group have of participating in / accessing closed spaces?
- Were you able to make your voice heard / influence decision making?
- What strategies have you used to gain access to closed and invited spaces?
- What strategies have you used to increase your influence in these spaces?

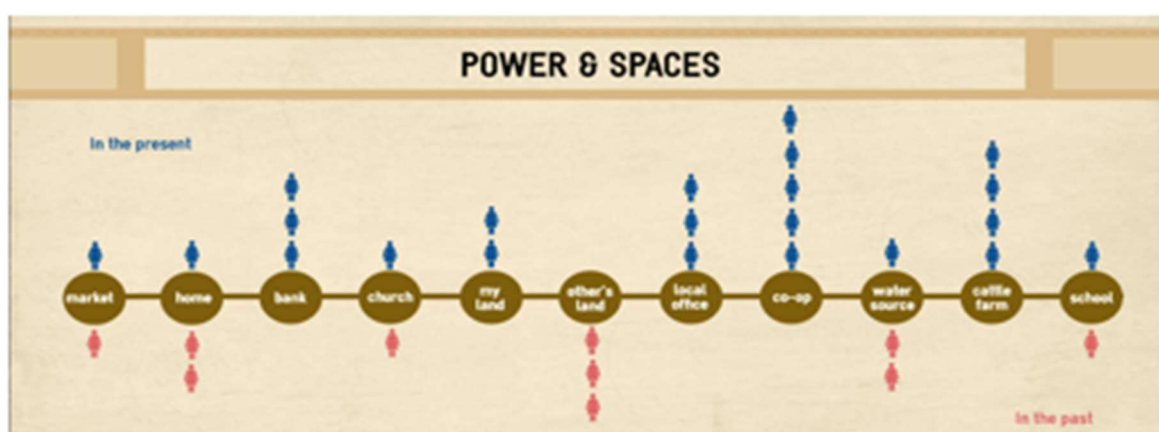
Documenting and reporting

The discussions and responses can be gathered and documented as people find most convenient and easy, but making sure that the critical words, example, metaphors, testimonies are captured and brought into the analysis. In addition, so as the knowledge gathering can be used as evidence - for example, to record how power looks now or how it changes over time, as long as it is documented rigorously. This means recording who is present and, even if it is not possible to write down names, recording how many men and how many women are present, their roles and getting informed consent.

The simplest way to document a social map is to take a photo or transform on a flip chart. However, the map is a very useful tool for power analysis, and so it is useful also to document the evidence in a written form to ensure that you record all the spaces identified and the extent of power that people have in them. You could do this in a table:

Spaces of Power Identified	Type of Power space (closed, invited or claimed)	The process that helped the group to be powerful (participate or influence) in a specific space.	Factors that are stopping the group from have power or influencing this space	Any other reflections e.g. Strategies identified to influence, access or participate

There are many tools available to represent the data generated by the ranking exercise, for example graphs, pie charts or any other visual graphic such as the example below:



Resources

- Women's Rights evaluation 2016, ActionAid International.
- [Critical webs of power and change](#), ActionAid International, 2005.
- [Power - Elite Capture and Hidden Influence](#), HRBA Governance Resources, ActionAid, 2012.