Overview

Community mapping can be used in many contexts and it helps us to recognise a wide range of possibilities within any given community context. This tool looks at using community mapping in the first stages of a project and recognising how you can determine the most crucial needs and significant strengths in a community.

Instructions

Community mapping is as simple as it is named. It is making or drawing at a physical map of the community, and then adding contextual needs, strengths or other significant factors in certain areas.

What you will need
- Large paper or space to draw on (can make markings on the floor if there is no pens and paper available)
- Counters - use what is available i.e. pebbles or beans.
- Pens (or sticks, chalk to mark with)

How to facilitate
- Clear a space and lay out your paper, or use an area of sanded floor you can mark. Or any other way of drawing over a large space.
- Create a basic map of the community area
  - Include main features in the community- e.g. roads, rivers, forests, boundaries
  - Include main facilities in the community- e.g. schools, hospital, church
- Discuss what is best about the community, or what significant strengths are. Use creative ways to draw these positive aspects onto the map.
- Discuss what your main concerns in the community are. Use creative ways to draw these concerns and add them to the map.
- Discuss which concerns are most crucial and have the most impact on the community.
- Discuss how the positive aspects can be built upon to mitigate or change some of the concerns.

Examples

Drawing a map using paper and pens (Sierra Leone) or the resources around you (Tanzania).
Go Deeper

Use a select amount of counters (i.e. pebbles or beans), and use to mark which of the areas of concern on the map are the most crucial. Use the counters as a simple voting system to grasp community priorities. Each person can place the counters on top of the ‘concern’ images if it is very important to them, and less counters if there is little impact on the community.

You can use a rating system to then discuss each issue one by one, looking individually at how many counters were used on each concern within the community. This can then be compared to the ways in which the concern can be dealt with and the impact this might have on the community.

You could encourage community members to take photos within their community to make the areas of concern more visually recognisable, adding these to the map and displaying it for me people to see and discuss it.

Top Tips

Don’t worry if the map is not to scale or an accurate map of the community. It is more important that people’s perceptions are captured and discussed, using this tool.

Encourage as many people as possible to mark something on the map.

Make sure the community is aware that the purpose of this tool is to recognise areas of concern and strengths, and that it will not be possible to address everything all at once.

If there is a large group, divide into smaller groups and create multiple maps. Encourage the groups to share together to compare what features are the same or different, and why.

Keep the map as a visual where the community members can access to recognise how they can build on this in the future. To build on this even further you can see the Community Mapping Part 2 Tool that allows you to apply Community Mapping as a way of evaluation.