



How to conduct community mapping

Participants include the core assessment team, extension staff, government representatives, natural resource managers, and local community members, ideally including both men and women and a mixture of expertise. Someone on the Assessment Team should have good map-drawing skills.

The Mapping Meeting

The Assessment Team starts the meeting by introducing themselves and informing the community of the planned assessment work. Each representative is then asked to introduce himself or herself. The Assessment Team then presents its motivations, explains the purpose of the mapping meeting and what they would like to achieve.

A large map of the site and surroundings is then spread out. If no detailed map of the site exists, a large-scale topographical map can be drawn either on the ground or on a large piece of paper/board. It should include simple topographic data including:

- Elevations – lower/upper, etc.;
- Simple information on soils;
- Vegetation;
- Ecological zones;
- Water availability;
- Tourist destination sites;
- Infrastructure such as roads, schools, health facilities, police posts, etc.

Once the main features are in place, participants can start filling in gaps, identifying areas with specific problems such as:

- Water shortage;
- Poor soils;
- Poor vegetation cover;
- Problem animal areas;
- Opportunities or potential for development such as infrastructure;
- Agricultural lands;
- Community recreational areas;
- Sustainable tourism sites;
- Areas of economic activity (i.e. hunting, logging, fishing, gathering areas)
- Commercial areas;
- Transportation/access;
- Future protected areas.

Before each resource or item is added on the map, it is very important for the facilitators to allow 5-10 minutes of discussion. The facilitator's role is to ask about whatever is being included in the map—how it affects, benefits, costs, and influences tourism development, and what are the trade-offs. The core team should be taking notes of all the comments and reactions from all participants.