

| Tool Name: Institutional Mapping/Venn Diagramming | |
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| What is it? | This tool is a visual method of identifying and representing perceptions of key institutions (formal and informal) and individuals inside and outside a community, their relationships, and importance. |
| What can it be used for? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding how different community members perceive institutions both within the community (in terms of decision making, accessibility, and services) and outside the community (in terms of participation, accessibility, and services) • identifying potential entry points for strengthening or improving relationships between key social actors |
| What does it tell you? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the interests, participation, and relationships of different social groups living in a community in local organizations/institutions • the perceived importance, accessibility, and impact of different institutions to local people of different social groups • the institutions in a community and how they relate both to each other and to external agencies involved in the delivery of services and the administration of programs |
| Complementary tools | Social mapping, mobility mapping |
| Key elements | This participatory information generating process uses local perceptions of institutional and individual relationships. |
| Requirements | |
| Data/information | This tool generates data and information; the only prior information required is for sampling analysts. |
| Time | 1.5 to 2 hours |
| Skills | Good participatory facilitation and social analytical skills; a natural resource disciplinary background is useful. |
| Supporting software | No software needed |
| Financial cost | This tool will cost \$30,000 to \$100,000 if conducted as part of a participatory study, depending on the number of communities sampled and the geographical scope of the study. |
| Limitations | Political or social relationships, which might not be obvious to an outsider, might influence group consensus. |
| References and applications | <p>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. http://www.fao.org/participation/.</p> <p><i>MekongInfo</i> is an interactive system for sharing information and knowledge about participatory natural resource management (NRM) in the Lower Mekong Basin. www.mekonginfo.org.</p> <p>Rock, F., ed. 2001. <i>Participatory Land Use Planning (PLUP) in Rural Cambodia</i>. Annex 11. Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction (MLMUPC), Cambodia. http://www.mekonginfo.org/mrc_en/doclib.nsf/0/BA7AA16ECF97B14247256BC90030DFF1/\$FILE/Annex11.html.</p> <p>RUAF (Resource Centres on Urban Agriculture and Food Security). 2004. <i>PRA Tools for Studying Urban Agriculture and Gender</i>. http://www.ruaf.org/ruafpublications.html#gender2.</p> <p>Sontheimer, S., et al. 1999. "Conducting a PRA Training and Modifying PRA Tools to Your Needs. An Example from a Participatory Household Food Security and Nutrition Project in Ethiopia." http://www.fao.org/documents/show_cdr.asp?url_file=/DOCREP/003/X5996E/X5996E00.HTM.</p> |

Institutional Mapping/Venn Diagramming: Procedures and Examples

Time, Materials, and Skills Needed

Up to two hours should be allowed to produce and analyze an institutional map and to ensure that a full discussion occurs with local analysts.

Markers and large sheets of paper are required. Notebooks/paper and pens are needed to make a copy of the diagram and for the note-taker to record the discussion during the diagram development. If the diagram is done on paper, use a pencil first, so that the local analysts can make changes as they develop the map.

The discussion group will include a facilitator, observer/note-taker, and selected local analysts. The facilitator and observer/note-taker should be experienced in the principles behind the use of participatory tools and methods in addition to their practical use.

Possible Approach

The following approach is a general example that can be adapted to suit the local context, views of local analysts, and the research objectives.

Step 1: Select Local Analysts. Identify the groups of people to talk to about their perceptions of their local institutions. These decisions will be based on the objectives and depth of information required for the research. At a basic level, it might be necessary to have separate groups by gender because women and men might perceive the importance and relevance of institutions in different ways. It might also be appropriate to break the population down into further categories (such as ethnicity, well-being, or caste). Groups of five to twelve local analysts should reflect any relevant and important social divisions.

Step 2: Provide Introductions and Explanations. When working with each group, the facilitator and observer/note-taker should begin by introducing themselves and explaining carefully and clearly the objectives of the discussion. Check that the local analysts understand and feel comfortable with what will be discussed. It may be useful to draw an example of a Venn diagram before starting the process in order to reduce confusion or misunderstanding.

Step 3: Produce an Institutional Map. Ask the local analysts to draw a large circle on large sheet of paper to represent their community. This community could be a village in rural areas or a district in urban areas.

Ask the local analysts to identify “actors” with whom they interact (in their economic, social, or political activity). Explain that these actors could be physically present in the area or could be associated directly or indirectly (such as politicians) and could be individuals, groups, or organizations. Ask the analysts to list the actors. Make sure that they include small informal groups or others that might be overlooked.

Next, ask the analysts to discuss the importance of each actor they listed. Ask them to choose an important actor and cut a large circle out of a card to represent it. Then ask the analysts to choose an actor they feel is not very important to them and cut a small

circle out of a card to represent it. Make sure that the cards representing the actors are clearly labeled in writing or with a symbol that everyone can understand.

Ask the local analysts to cut a circle out of a card for each actor and to base its size on the relative importance of the actor. Ensure that everyone participates in the discussion regarding the size of circle. Note also the basis for determining importance for the local analysts.

Ask the analysts to put the cards representing actors onto the large circle drawn earlier that represents the community. The placement of the cards in relation to the large circle and each other should represent factors such as accessibility and cooperation/contact. For example, actors that are felt to be very inaccessible should be placed farther away than the actors that are felt to be very accessible. This refers to the accessibility of the institutional resources or the degree to which the actor can be accessed in terms of consultation or influence. Emphasize that the distance of a paper disc from the circle that represents the village does *not* mean geographical distance.

The actors can be related to each other through overlaps where these exist, through incorporation where one institution lies entirely within another, and through separate locations where there is no overlap. For example, actors with no or very little contact or cooperation should be placed farther apart from each other than those with closer contact or cooperation, which should overlap to some degree.

The analysts should change the position of the paper discs if desired (for example, after a second round of discussion) until they are happy with the diagram. Check that the basic diagram is correct and ask the analysts to reproduce a clean version on another sheet of paper or to paste the discs on the paper sheet.

Step 4: Analyze an Institutional Map. Many aspects of the relationships between actors and community members can be explored using the institutional map (for example, power and influence, flows of money or information, social or cultural bonds or constraints, legal or institutional mandate, fear, mutually beneficial collaboration, altruism). Exploring the basis of each relationship can lead to a discussion regarding how these relationships can be changed or improved, including possible opportunities and constraints.

Specific questions can also be explored to gain more focused information. For example, institutional mapping could be used in an analysis of risk and vulnerability through questions regarding the social networks/institutions that help people to best deal with risk and vulnerability; the institutions that are most important in times of risk and vulnerability; and perceptions about the help from government services in helping people to cope with risk and vulnerability.

It is important to bear in mind, however, that a partial or even inaccurate view of reality might be expressed in the map and analysis. There might be, for example, hidden power relationships that some would prefer not to reveal. This problem could be addressed by comparing a range of maps and analysis by different social groups and by looking for inconsistencies or contradictions. Knowledge of the composition of groups of local analysts (such as membership of organizations, position within a community, and occupation) would be useful at this stage.

If there are several different groups of analysts, ask each group to present its map to the others for their reactions and comments. Are there any serious disagreements? If so, note these and where a consensus is or is not reached. However, while this could highlight any conflicts and frictions in the community between different organizations or with outside organizations and be useful during planning processes and for any policy change and implementation, care should be taken when facilitating discussions around potentially sensitive issues to ensure that conflicts or disagreements are not inflamed further.

Step 5: Conclude the Activity. Check again that the local analysts know how the information will be used. Ask the analysts to reflect on the advantages, disadvantages, and the analytical potential of the tool. Thank the local analysts for their time and effort.

Points to Remember

Good facilitation skills are key. The approach outlined above is a general guide; be flexible and adapt the tool and approach to local contexts and needs.