



TOOL 10

SOCIAL MAPPING



Members of the Tahiry Honko project in Madagascar
Credit: Blue Ventures



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What is the **purpose** of social mapping?

Social mapping is a tool to assist the project team to learn about the social structure of a community and how differences among households are defined. For example, local definitions of “lower”, “middle” and “upper” classes of households, based on criteria such as wealth, social status, power, ethnicity, caste and religion. It is a visual method for showing the relative geographical location of households and the distribution of different people together with the social structure, groups and organisations in an area.

Social mapping is similar to Participatory Resource mapping, but the focus of the map is more on social structures and equity rather than natural resources.

What is it **useful** for?

- Exploring community structure, organisations and processes.
- Identifying who lives where in a community.
- Identifying different social groups using locally defined criteria and discussing social inequities (see also Tool 5 - Well-being Assessment).
- Identifying the location of different social groups in relation to key natural resources, including biodiversity and ecosystem services, and the community structures and processes that may be relevant in influencing the distribution of benefits.
- Identifying which community members may be most vulnerable to various hazards and risks, including those resulting from climate change, and discussing coping strategies and opportunities (see also Tool 6 - Climate Vulnerability Assessment/Mapping).
- Identifying the location, access and use of key resources, including biodiversity and ecosystem services, in relation to different social groups in order to inform ecosystem services valuation and equitable benefit sharing mechanisms.
- Introducing discussions on inequities (e.g., in resource availability), social problems, strategies used to cope with such problems and the solutions attempted.

Plan Vivo Carbon Standard (PV Climate) **requirement?**

Not required but recommended to use during initial stages of project design.

When to use this tool?

It is useful during the initial phase of project design to identify and locate various socio-economic and other stakeholder groups in the village, inform stakeholder analysis and set the socio-economic baseline.

Who should participate?

It is not necessary that all stakeholder groups or their representatives participate in community social mapping, but it is recommended that at least the village heads, some elders and people who have lived in the village for a long time participate in this exercise. Include both men and women and ensure that different caste, class, and ethnic groups are involved.

The facilitator should try to identify and involve at least one member of each local stakeholder group with particular focus on vulnerable and marginalised community members such as smallholder farmers, indigineous people, women, migrant labourers or refugees, members from disabled communities and LGBT communities, members of different ages and other socially excluded groups.

How to use the tool?

- ☐ Invite a group of community members most likely to know all the households in the community (up to 15 people maximum).
- ☐ Introduce the exercise and explain its aims. Allow participants to introduce themselves individually.
- ☐ Explain that participants will prepare a map showing features in the village or covering a different area as required by the project.
- ☐ Select a suitable place to prepare the map and all the necessary materials. These could be natural objects such as stones, seeds, sticks, leaves, and coloured powder laid on the ground with chalk, or flipchart paper with coloured marker pens. Locally collected materials are especially useful in enabling people to prepare the map quickly - but have the disadvantage of not resulting in a permanent map.
- ☐ Ask participants to prepare the outline or boundary of the map. It might be helpful for them to start by placing a rock or leaf to represent a central and important landmark. Another option is to draw a simple village map showing some features such as roads, paths, and watercourses for orientation. Although it might take some time to get going, the process should not be rushed.

- ☐ Ask participants to identify and draw major landmarks on the map using natural materials or pens. For example, religious buildings, schools, health centres, traditional healers, places where people frequently meet, community centres, and other public and business buildings. Services or facilities such as irrigation, electricity, water, gas, telephone, and so on.
- ☐ Next ask participants to mark the location of houses in the community on the map. To differentiate these houses, participants can mark the houses/areas of housing in different colours to indicate which belong to households of different well-being categories (such as rich, better-off, poor, and very poor)
- ☐ The map can also be used to identify houses that belong to people from different social categories (such as ethnicity, female headed-households, and large households); people with special functions (such as a village chief); households with shops or other small businesses; and households with relatives abroad. These categories can all be identified by particular symbols which should then be explained in a legend.
- ☐ Once the map drawing by participants is underway, sit back and observe and only interrupt if absolutely necessary in order to clarify something or help participants if they get stuck.
- ☐ If the map is being drawn on the ground, once the broad outline has been established local participants can start making a copy on to paper (indicating which direction is north). Alternatively take a photograph. This is important because extra information and corrections can often arise as a result. Also, it is important that a copy or permanent record of the map is available to participants.
- ☐ Discuss and analyse the results. Ask participants to describe their map and ask questions about anything that is unclear. If there are several different groups, ask each group to present their map to the others for their reactions and comments.

Notes

- It is important to agree upon the criteria for defining wealth and social status. Preferably a well-being assessment (Tool 5) will already have been carried out, so the categories will already be known. Similarly, the stakeholder analysis (Tool 1) will have shown the main stakeholder groups with which the project needs to work.
- It is not necessary to develop an absolutely accurate map – the goal is to explore local perceptions about the social and physical structures of a community.
- Social mapping is easier when communities are small, but the process

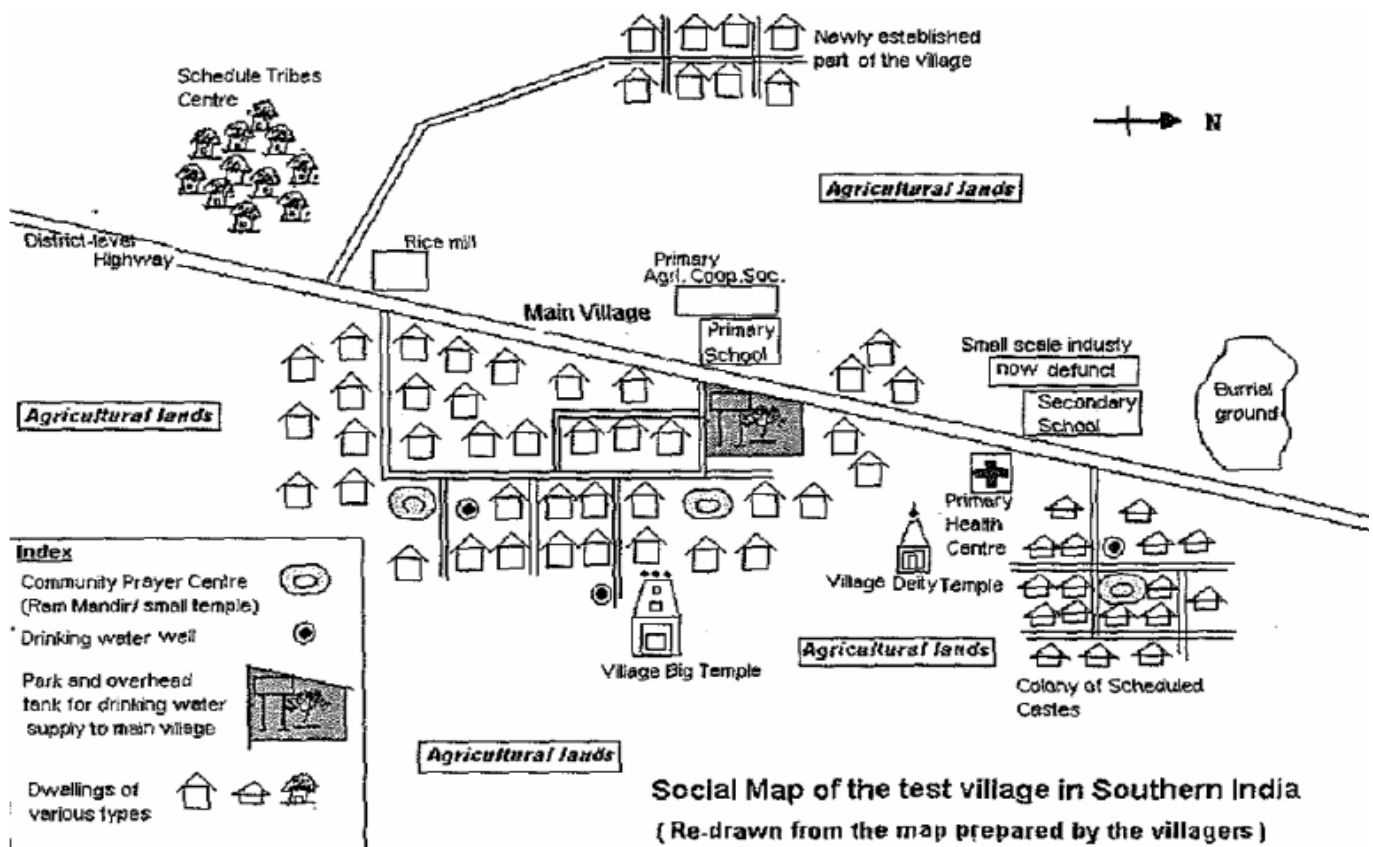
becomes much more complex when household numbers are high. It might be necessary to adapt the tool in these contexts or ask several different groups to each prepare their own map.

- The social map produced will only be a snapshot of the current situation. If a historical perspective is needed or arises and local participants have sufficient time, it might be useful to draw a series of maps to illustrate changes over time (see also Tool 7 - Historical timeline).
- Participants should be encouraged to draw as much of the map as possible without interruption and to suggest anything else that should be recorded.
- The final map should indicate orientation (i.e., North, South, East, West), village boundaries (e.g., with other villages, roads, and rivers), and main landmarks (such as a village hall, dispensary, place of worship, etc.).

Examples of social mapping

A social map produced by a village community in southern India is shown below. The map shows the overall make-up of the village, including the areas of habitation of the principal social groups, new extensions to the village, the common amenities for the village community, and places of social interaction.

A: Social map of test village in southern India



Source: FAO(2006) <https://www.fao.org/3/ag863e/ag863e.pdf>