

SOCIAL MAPPING

Conservation, Livelihoods and Governance Programme Tools for participatory approaches

February 2013

Social mapping is a visual method of showing the relative location of households and the distribution of different people (such as male, female, adult, child, landed, landless, literate, and illiterate) together with the social structure, groups and organisations of an area.

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.
- Identifying the location of different social groups in relation to key 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.
- 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.

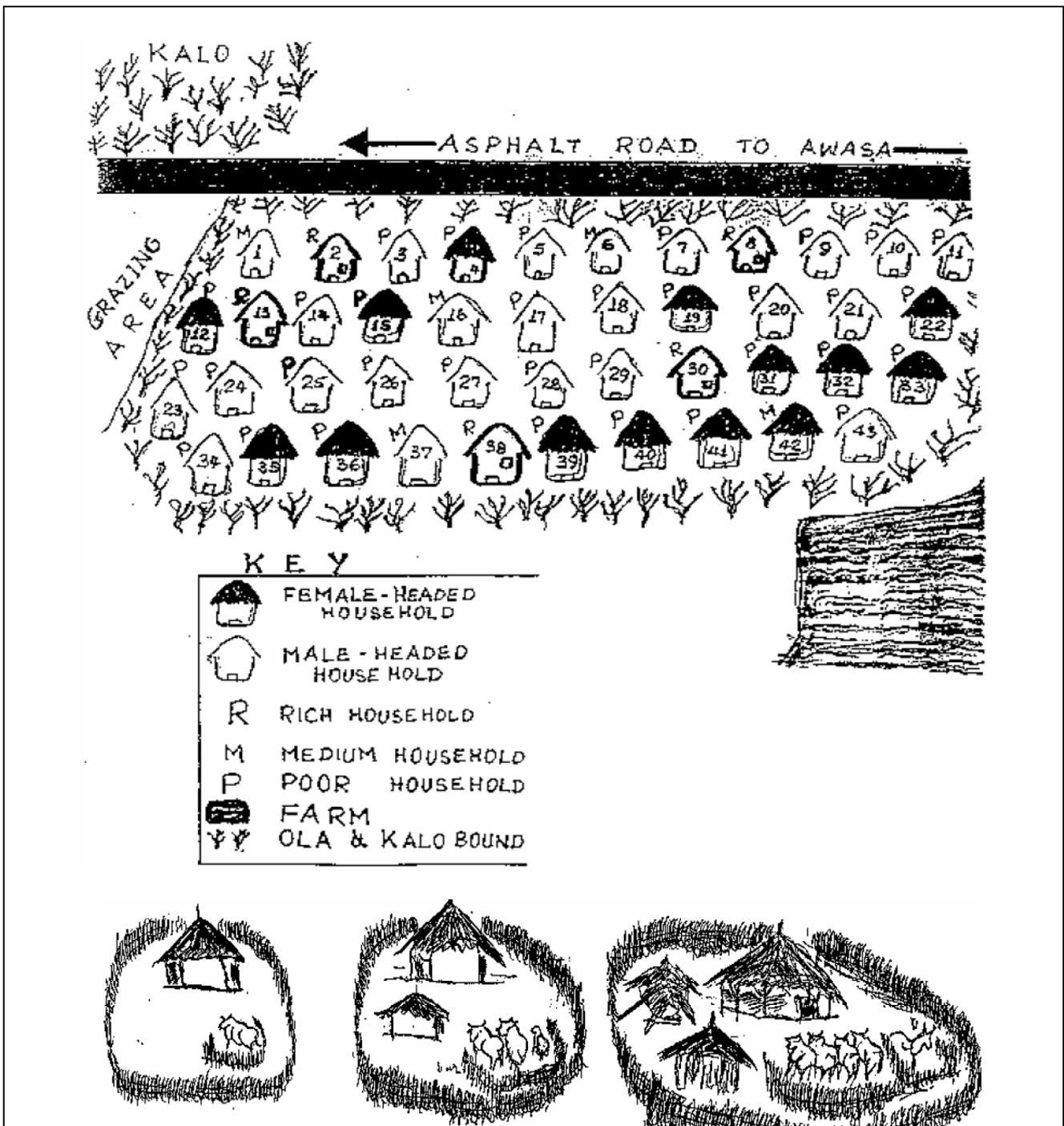
Suggested steps

Allow up to **3 hours** for this exercise.

- 1) Agree with participants what area the map will show, such as a village, an indigenous ancestral domain, a watershed, and so on. Social maps begin as physical maps of the residential area of a community. The principles followed in setting up the exercise and getting going for the social map are similar to those used with a community resource map; it might even be possible and useful to combine both and produce one map showing social and resource aspects of the community.
- 2) Ask participants to select a suitable place and medium, such as on the ground using objects such as stones, seeds, sticks, leaves, and coloured powder; on the floor using chalk; or directly onto a large sheet of paper, using pencils and pens. Materials collected locally such as seeds are especially useful in enabling people to map distributions quickly and effectively.
- 3) Participants first 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.

- 4) Other landmarks that are important to participants should be identified and drawn on the map. These might include 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 should also be marked on the map.
- 5) The location of houses in the community should then be marked on the map (if desired, each house can be marked as a small empty square, if using paper and pens). Participants can then 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). It is important that the criteria used to distinguish different well-being criteria are noted on the map and that all participants have the same understanding of the criteria and characteristics.

Figure 1: Example of village social map, with simple wealth ranking, from Ethiopia (FAO, 2001)



- 6) 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.
- 7) Once the map is underway, sit back and observe and only interrupt if absolutely necessary in order to clarify something or help participants if they get stuck.
- 8) 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). This process 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 if they want it.
- 9) 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 its map to the others for their reactions and comments. Are there any major differences? If so, note these and also whether the differences are resolved.

Questions to guide discussion and analysis

The following questions can be used to guide the discussion but should be adopted and adapted according to the focus of the exercise.

- What are the approximate boundaries of the community with regard to social interaction and services?
- How many households are in the community and where are they located? Are living arrangements by nuclear family or extended family?
- What are the main socio-economic groups and where do they live? Religious groups? Ethnic groups?
- Which households are headed by females and where are they located? Is the number growing? If so, why?
- How is land distributed for housing? Are there certain areas where poorer people are located?
- Which households (or areas) are richer? Or less poor? Which poorer? How are 'rich', 'medium' or 'less poor', and 'poor' defined?
- Is the number of households growing or shrinking? Why? (Birth rates, out-migration, in-migration, other)
- Has this rate caused problems for particular households or for the community in general?
- What social structures and institutions are found in the community?
- Who uses the community centres? Who uses other available services?
- How does access to economic, social, political, and natural resources differ by household or social group?
- Which areas are most at risk from climate related (or other) events? Which groups of people are more vulnerable to particular hazards?
- How might a proposed project / intervention impact on access to resources, livelihoods or other opportunities for different groups in the community?

Points to remember:

- ❖ 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.
- ❖ For a deeper analysis of different socio-economic groups and the distribution of assets between these groups a wealth ranking or well-being assessment tool will be more appropriate.
- ❖ 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.
- ❖ Local participants should be encouraged to build as much of the diagram as possible without interruption and to suggest anything else that should be recorded.
- ❖ Before using this tool read the accompanying document, *A guide to using tools for participatory approaches*.

For further information

World Bank (2005) *Poverty and Social Impact Analysis Sourcebook*
<http://go.worldbank.org/ZGZHJEDBZ0>

This tool is based on *Social mapping* in the World Bank (2005) *Poverty and Social Impact Analysis Sourcebook*



FFI's Conservation, Livelihoods and Governance programme is financially supported by Anglo American.



The development and public dissemination of this tool has been co-funded by the British American Tobacco Biodiversity Partnership.



Fauna & Flora International, 4th Floor, Jupiter House, Station Road,
Cambridge, CB1 2JD
Telephone +44 (0) 1223 571000
Fax +44 (0) 1223 571000
Email info@fauna-flora.org