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D3.1 Participatory Mapping

Assisted by a facilitator, the local community develops a map of the target area, thereby focusing on features related to water supply and sanitation infrastructure and services.

PURPOSE

Community maps help to visualize and analyze the situation and to understand the access of different socio-economic groups to water supply and environmental sanitation services. Maps produced in an interactive process with the community reveal important information about local conditions and the community's perception. They can be used for planning, evaluation and monitoring.

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

Community mapping requires a facilitator and a suitable, central place for the exercise. The area to be mapped should be agreed upon in advance. Only for small communities the entire neighbourhood is drawn. If the area is too big, neighbourhoods are mapped separately or a generalised map showing relevant infrastructure is made. Exemplary neighbourhoods representing typical conditions of the area (e.g. richer and poorer sections) are selected and mapped in greater detail.

Community representatives from all relevant groups (women and men, children and adults, poor to rich) should be invited to participate in the exercise. If gender relations do not allow involving women and men together, the mapping should be carried out in separate groups.

Materials needed include

- large pieces of paper or blackboard/whiteboard
- coloured pens & markers
- objects to symbolise features on the map (such as stickers, coloured paper, small flags, pins or string)

PROCEDURE

After the facilitator has explained the purpose of the exercise, a list of features to be displayed on the map is developed in a discussion. Relevant features are

- community boundaries
- existing infrastructure like roads, paths and houses
- major landmarks and geographical features like hills, industrial and commercial buildings, schools, clinics and religious places
- water bodies (rivers, ponds, springs, etc.), forests and fields
- sources of pollution
- water and sanitation facilities (including informal facilities, private and public facilities as well as infrastructure provided by external agencies)
- sections with good and bad access to water supply and sanitation (e.g. homes without sanitation facilities)

For each feature, a symbol to be used on the map is defined. The community mapping team then draws the map on the ground or on paper. If necessary, participants can be sent off to gather information in the field. The facilitator ensures balanced interaction of all participants. If there is more than one group, each of them explains their drawing and in the end all the maps are consolidated into one that includes the entire information.

Alternatively, participants can be asked to identify problem areas on an existing map.

PROCESSING AND USE OF INFORMATION

The final map including its legend can be photographed or transferred to paper. Key information (e.g. number, type and location of water supply and sanitation facilities, areas with different levels of service provision, etc.) can be extracted for further use in the following planning steps.

The map is valuable source of information for analysing the existing conditions, need for improvements and suitable solutions (e.g. in the official launching workshop (Step 2) or in the detailed assessment (Step 3) for information synthesis and planning of a transect walk and field visits).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- WSP & Gol (2008): A guide to decision making: Technology Options for Urban Sanitation in India
- WaterAid (2005): Community mapping. A tool for community organising. Guidelines for WaterAid Programmes and Partners.