

Transect Walk

I. Description:

The Transect Walk is a group exercise that entails walking between two points to intentionally cross or transect a community. The group explores environmental and social resources, conditions and systems by observing, asking, listening, looking and producing a transect diagram. Specific information may be collected to reveal land use practices, hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities to inform disaster mitigation and preparation plans and longer term climate resilience plans.

II. Purpose:

The Transect Walk reveals the location and distribution of resources, infrastructure, social interaction, landscape, land use patterns and different activities taking place within a community or targeted area. The exercise involves group members speaking with people in the community and active observation of the environment to capture key information (e.g., assets, hazards, livelihoods) that is then used in the classification of zones (i.e., land use, vulnerability, social conditions). Conversations along the way offer the opportunity to hear perspectives from a diverse array of community members and to gain insight on how the physical and social characteristics and relationships have changed over time.

III. Project Cycle Application:

1 - Assessment Phase	Can be used to help people discover under appreciated or unexpected patterns throughout a community.
2 - Planning Phase	Can be used to focus people's attention on assets and livelihood activities that project activities can build upon.
3 - Implementation & Monitoring Phase	Can be used to focus or redirect participants' activities to new or more appropriate locations or resources within a community. Can be used to help participants verify the progress of planned activities through observation and inquiry.
4 - Evaluation Phase	Can be used by participants to identify results by comparing their pre- and post-project Transect Walks to reveal changes in patterns or zones (e.g., Have social status/vulnerability zones shrunk? Have hazards been removed?).
5 - Reporting Phase	The Transect Walk can be the participants' "Report" as they lead the wider community, government leaders, and/or others in the exercise and encourage observations and informant interviews (hear change stories) along the walk.

IV. Facilitation Steps:

Step 1: Preparation

Choose a route between two points through the chosen area. The route chosen should attempt to pass through as many of the different physical areas, land-use zones and social statuses of the community as possible. If the geographic location and/or number of participants is large, the group may be divided into teams and multiple routes may be walked. Materials include participant notebooks and pens.

Step 2: Introduction

The exercise can take between 1 and 3 hours, depending upon the distance to cover, the number of participants and the different stops and conversations along the way. Introduce the Transect Walk by sharing the purpose. This is the opportunity to focus people's observations and conversations on a particular aspect of the community, if so desired (e.g., access to water, asset use, environmental

protection, safety, social activities, etc.). Remind participants that their role is make notes of what they see and hear along the walk.

Step 3: Exercise Instructions

- As a group, walk along the route stopping from time to time (as features change) to note what is being observed. Prompt the group by asking:
 - What do you see?
 - Who do you see and what are they doing?
 - What assets are being used (natural, physical, intellectual, economic, social, temporal, spiritual)?
 - What assets are not being used?
- Identify and talk to people along the way to ask:
 - What is this (a structure, landscape) or what is going on (activity)?
 - What else typically happens?
 - Are there daily or seasonal variations?
- Ensure that some group members are keeping a record of all vital information.
- Ensure that some group members are drawing a map and sketching key features/land markers/assets as they are encountered.

Step 4: Debrief & Learning *(Look, Think, Plan)*

After the walk, sit down in a suitable place and facilitate your group to compile a diagram or table of the main features observed (see sample images below). Encourage contributions from all. Facilitate the determination of distinct zones, and list each zone's distinct assets (or specific feature per the topics of investigation, e.g., vulnerabilities, hazards, vegetation, sanitation, etc.). This diagram or table becomes a guide for discussion and the identification of learning points with questions such as:

- What did you discover that was new? What surprised you?
- What types of resources appear to be most valued? Most used? Least used? Why?
- What patterns do you see?
- What opportunities has your Transect Walk revealed? How do they relate to your program or aspirations for yourself and your community?

V. Useful Hints:

- Be clear about the purpose of the walk to focus people's attention on the features pertinent to the action planning that will follow (i.e., asset identification, climate resilience, water and sanitation, child safeguarding, gender and protection, etc.).
- Don't forget to be flexible and spontaneous when opportunities arise to gather rich and varied data.
- Consider varying the route and time of the walk (day vs. night) to capture contextual information.
- If appropriate, consider taking a camera and/or video-recorder to capture observations and interviews along the route.

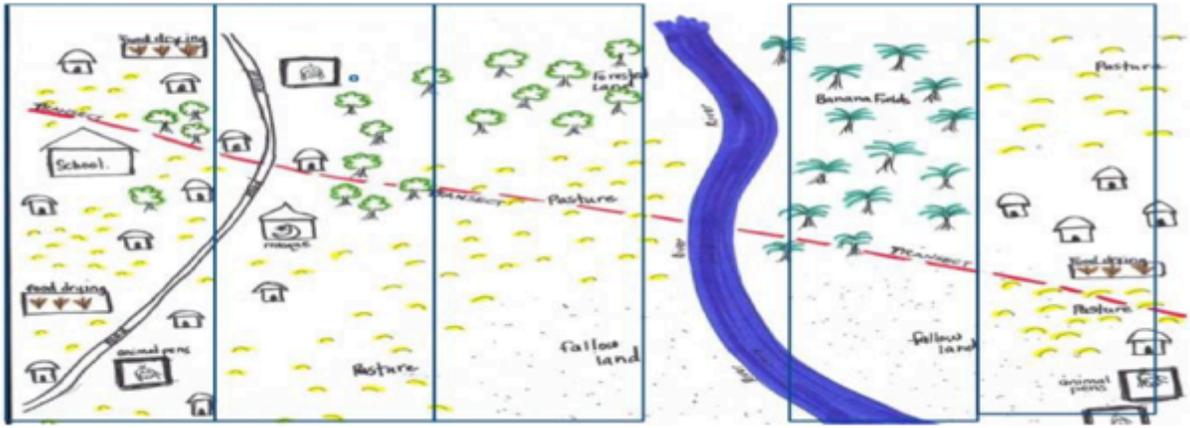
VI. Pairing Pathways:

The Transect Walk is useful when paired with:

- People's Map to triangulate data and identify patterns.
- Analysis exercises, such as Seasonal Calendar and Historical Timeline, to highlight changes in patterns across time.

VII. Examples of Tool Usage

- Image 1: Asset Identification Transect Walk *(Coady International Institute 2012)*
Example shows the demarcation of zones; as a next step, the facilitator will assist the group to complete the classification of assets discovered in each zone.



ASSETS	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4	Zone 5	Zone 6
Natural						
Physical						
Intellectual						
Economic						
Social						
Temporal						
Spiritual						

• Image 2: Disaster Risk Reduction Transect Walk (Episcopal Relief & Development [Pastors and Disasters](#) 2014)



VIII. Sources

Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO). *Participatory Approaches: A facilitator's guide Tools, Part III Toolkit*. 2009 http://www.cropwildrelatives.org/fileadmin/templates/cropwildrelatives.org/upload/In_situ_Manual/VSO_Facilitator_Guide_to_Participatory_Approaches_Tools.pdf

BSR's *Participatory Learning and Action Toolkit* (2012) <https://herproject.org/files/toolkits/HERproject-Participatory-Learning.pdf>