

Day of Prayer and Action for Children Community Mapping for Pregnant Women + New Mothers

What is community mapping? Community mapping is a participatory process of creating maps or visual representations of a community as best understood by its members. Maps can be drawn for various reasons; in this case, it can lead to lifesaving care for pregnant women and new mothers.

Support community mapping campaigns for local pregnant women who may need information on the most accessible and safest hospitals for emergency delivery. Identify local hospitals and clinics where pregnant women can go in case of emergency. Consider the key questions: Where are they located? How can pregnant women get there?

How do we begin? Community mapping is a hands-on activity that can be done simply. You will need a group of volunteers and an open space where they can create a map after their study process is complete.

- 1. Arrange a tour.** First, community members must become familiar with the community and the services available. Depending on how near or far the health facilities are, it is best to have all participants walk or arrange transportation to tour the area.
- 2. Organize and focus the group.** Before the tour, tell participants what to look for. If possible, give them a printed list to refer to. See if it makes sense to divide people into teams and have them report back on what they have observed.
- 3. Document the visit.** Ask participants to identify key characteristics they notice, such as: "How easy is it to get here by public transportation? Are there alternate routes if there is a problem with buses or trains? Is the area lit after sunset so that women will feel safe coming here?" If available, use digital or video cameras to capture images for future reference. If making a videotape is not possible, photographs are still a valuable tool. And if neither videos nor photos are possible, have people take notes and/or draw images of what they have learned.
- 4. Gather to draw the map.** With the community members, choose a suitable location to draw the map as a team. You can use a variety of materials to illustrate the map: sticks, stones, paper, ashes, empty tins, water, various colors of crushed chalk, charcoal and other locally available materials as chosen by the group. Often, mapping activities are conducted outdoors, and participants can gather natural materials from the surrounding area. Most often, maps are drawn on the ground, by tracing into the dirt.
- 5. Let the members agree** on which items or materials should be used to represent each object. Be sure to construct a key. The map should show major infrastructure (health centers, local government offices, schools, worship centers, water sources, markets, etc.); other prominent landmarks; other features relevant to the team.

Using a pencil, accurately transfer the map to paper. It may be useful to make more than one copy. Be sure to include the names of all those who took part. This will allow other community members to

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know who can answer their questions, in case they have any. And it will recognize the participants for their contribution to the work. Include the date on the map so you will know when it was done!

6. Display the map in your community. Let it be an encouragement to others. Decide on how it will be used to help pregnant women, mothers and newborns.

ENDNOTE

AIDSMARK work inspired this community mapping exercise. <http://www.aidsmark.org/>