

# Transect Walk

## What is it?

A transect walk involves walking through the community to observe and discuss the daily activities, the surroundings and the risks and resources. It is used to note the sites and topography of the area, to understand interrelationships based on space. It is a useful exercise to do in the assessment stage to get a feeling for the issues and capacities which exist in a community. In the programming and evaluation phases, it can be used to verify what changes have occurred in a community.

A transect walk is usually done early in the process because it gives an overall view of the community and helps identify things that may require further investigation later on during interviews or group meetings. The tool is most effective when done with community members.

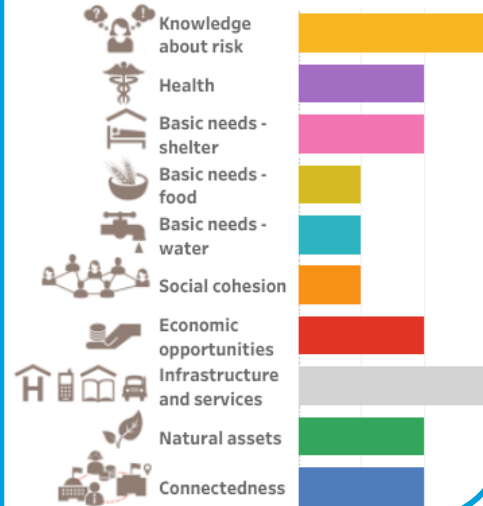


2-4 hours



Paper and pens, cameras or phones, digital mapping tools.

### Resilience characteristics covered:



Philippine Red Cross

## Use it to...

- **Build** trust with the community by being visible.
- **Cross-check** oral information and verify the information from the mapping exercise.
- **See** first-hand the interactions between the physical environment and human activities, behaviour, values, attitudes, practices and capacities.
- **Complement** the information in the maps with additional details and spark further discussion on danger zones, evacuation sites and local resources used during emergency periods, land use zones and natural resource management, commercial activity in the community, health issues, and safety and shelter concerns.
- **Identify** problems and opportunities which may be worth further exploration such as, housing or sanitary conditions; food available and sold in open-air markets; informal street commerce; or roles of men, women and children.

## Skills needed

The **facilitator** does not need extensive previous experience to use this tool but should be able to record and systematize the information gathered.

## Tool additional considerations

This tool has been revised to include basic aspects related to climate change, livelihoods, gender and diversity and health. However, if you want to go more in-depth into these issues we have compiled additional tool considerations on these topics [here](#). These should be read and used as a complementary note to the steps described below.

## How to do it

### *Step 1. Select and prepare participants*

**Participants** should have a good understanding of the community and be representative of the different groups in the community.



**Tip:** it can be useful to have a few people from other neighbourhoods or even neighbouring communities as part of a group as they might see things ‘with a fresh eye’. Ensure that a **representative** and **gender balanced team** accompanies you on the walk to facilitate discussions with men and women during the walk. The group could be a mix of genders, age, disability groups and other groups in the community which can act as awareness raising activity to get to know different perspectives, or conducted as a separate transect walks with different groups.

Provisions for people with disabilities should be made so they can participate in the transect walk.

Ensure volunteers and community members are safe and secure as they walk through the community or municipality. It may be necessary to have visibility gear for mappers especially if they are using OSM or other digital tools (cameras etc.) to document the findings.

## Step 2. Identify the route to be taken and the time

Once a mapping exercise has been carried out (spatial map, hazard/risk map, capacity and resources map), the group should pinpoint the areas most at risk, which is where the transect walk should be done. You can have more than one group and conduct walks along different routes. Remember to also prepare by studying the target area/community in the wider environment as available in secondary sources like 'Google Maps' or 'Google Earth' etc. ([see Review of Secondary Sources](#)).

The **route can be decided** by drawing a line on the community map that goes through or "transects" all zones to gain a representative view of the community. Another possibility is to walk from one point to another, for example from north to south, or from the highest point to the lowest point, from the mountains to the waterside. When identifying the "transect" to take, ensure this has been identified in consultation with the different groups in the community to ensure a representative view. People with disabilities may have to take different routes to access various services that other people in the community may not be aware of.



**Consider the best moment for the walk**, according to your objective, if you want to observe livelihood activities it should be during labour time, if not maybe in other moments during day or weekends/day off.

## Step 3. Identify what you want to look for on the walk.

Make a checklist of the locations or area that you want to visit. Try to see that you visit different locations related to the six characteristics of resilience (see example table below). This may include:

- **Social environment to assess social cohesion and connectedness:** church, sports fields, shopping areas, restaurants, main areas of gathering (for children, adolescents, adults);
- **Physical environment to assess basic shelter and water needs, and infrastructure and services:** characteristics of housing construction and sanitation facilities, quality of roads, streets, bridges, drainage systems, water points, health and education facilities etc.;
- **Neighbouring communities/ cities to assess connectedness:** How close is the neighbouring community? Does the neighbouring community have any influence in the community you are working with? For example, does garbage from community A affect community B? Do people from community B go to community A to access health care?
- **Natural environment to assess risk location, natural assets management, and economic activities:** Hilly areas, steep slopes, coastal erosion, deforestation, status of rivers and major streams, land reserved for crops or livestock (grazeland), mono-cropping or intercropping, etc.

## Step 4. Add direct observation and interviews.

While walking, stop in different places, look at all possible elements of the analysis (see diagram below for the recommended ones). **Take time during the walk to stop and talk** to men, women, youth, elderly, disabled and others. Observe the services, hazards and risks that apply to different groups. ([See direct observation](#))





Try to better understand the changes over time, which can be done by triangulating with secondary information. Try to make observations of possible hazards that might be aggravated by changing weather patterns and note questions you may want to ask the community such as danger zones, erosion, flood plains, etc.



**Step 5. Record and analyse the information.**




Write down, draw or take pictures of what you see and hear as you go along. Later this can be transferred to a transect diagram (see below) and/or added onto the community map. When recording the information disaggregate it by sex especially when noting: types of livelihoods, community centres, specific risks mentioned, land ownership, etc. As well as highlighting information provided by specific groups in the community.

**TIP!**











Take pictures or videos when possible as means of verification. You can also use digital tools to record the observations at different points in a map. Track your walk by GPS (either in a smartphone app, or dedicated GPS unit), 'mark' (or note position of) special locations on the walk, and later check them by entering the coordinates in 'Google Earth' or Maps.Me.

### Step 5. Draw a diagram of what you saw.

Example from VCA training in Eritrea

					
<b>Type of ground</b>	Hilly, slopy, valley	Rocky, hilly, valley	Hilly, slopy, valley	Hilly, slopy, valley, flat	Hilly, slopy, rocky, flat
<b>Livelihoods</b>	Irrigation, farming, settlements, health, school, hay storage, water harvesting	Settlements, farming, soil erosion control measures, water harvesting	Irrigation, farming, settlements, grazing, water point, water harvesting, soil and water conservation	Farming, grazing, firewood collection	Farming, grazing, soil and water conservation activities
<b>Risks/hazards</b>	Soil erosion, water contamination, mosquito breeding	Erosion, mosquito breeding, unprotected dam	Erosion, poor sanitation at water point, open well	Erosion, soil degradation, contamination of underground water, depletion of underground water	Soil erosion, soil degradation, contamination of underground water, depletion of underground water
<b>Conditions that increase vulnerability</b>	Slopy ground, stagnant nature of water, deforestation, use of artificial fertilizer	Stagnant nature of water, slopy ground	Unprotected spring, deforestation, slopy ground, use of artificial fertilizer, overuse (pressure) on water point	Deforestation, slopy nature of the ground, overgrazing, use of artificial fertilizer	Deforestation, slopy nature of the ground, overgrazing, use of artificial fertilizer
<b>Beliefs and values</b>	Church, aloe for medicine	Aloe for traditional medicine	Church, aloe for traditional medicine	Aloe and eucalyptus for traditional medicine	-
<b>Capacities</b>	Rocks, catchments, food production, water pump, water harvesting	Dam, catchments, food production	Road access, rocks for construction, soil erosion control measures, food production, potential catchments	Road access, rocks for construction, soil erosion control measures, food production, potential catchments	Rocks for construction, road access, soil and water conservation measures, food production, potential catchments
<b>Natural environment</b>	Water, aloe and eucalyptus trees	Aloe, water	Grazing area, water well, rocks	Aloe, eucalyptus trees	-

Note down what you saw when walking through the community in the same way as you would systematize information collected by [direct observation](#) sorting it into the resilience characteristics. What are the problems specific to your area of intervention? What issues can be highlighted to partner organizations or government agencies? Determine areas that need to be further explored (either physical areas or issues) and select the tools to use, including [semi-structured interviews](#).

Resilience characteristics	Coverage of characteristic by tool	Example of information that can be collected	Vulnerabilities identified	Capacities identified
Knowledge about risk		Risk location, e.g. flood zones, landslide risk areas, dangerous roads with high frequency of accidents, check evacuation routes and safe zones, etc.		
Health		(Linked to infrastructure): health facilities, sport facilities, poor water and sanitation facilities, garbage dump sites, mosquito breeding grounds, overcrowded areas, etc.		
Basic needs – shelter		Type of houses, houses located in high risk locations, identifying weak and strong structures, risk reduction features (e.g. on stilts, earthquake proof, hurricane shutters, etc), overcrowded areas (fire risk), etc.		
Basic needs – food		Prevalence of backyard and community nutrition gardens or urban agriculture, food storage, restaurants and food stands, etc.		
Basic needs – water		Location of water sources, wells, pipes, etc.		
Social cohesion		places of social activities like community centre, recreation areas, areas with high crime rates (social violence)		
Economic opportunities		Location of fields, farms, businesses, workplaces, markets, shops, etc.		
Infrastructure and services		Quality of roads, streets, bridges, drainage, electricity lines, quality of structure of hospitals/clinics and schools and if they are in risk location and have safety standards in place.		
Natural assets		Status of rivers (pollution), coastal erosion, mangroves and forests management, protected zones, green zones/parks, etc.		
Connectedness		Access to government offices, RC/RC branch, distance to nearest city/centre.		

## Constraints and pitfalls

If the facilitators are new to the community, they may not know the areas to walk through. It is helpful to bring others – a translator, community leaders or government officials – with them but they must be aware of their influence on what they do and do not see as well as on how people respond to you with them present.

Due to security issues there may be access constraints in areas controlled by gangs/groups, identify no-go areas if not done already and who is affected (men, women, children, elderly or different groups).