## Transect Walk

**Description:**

After introducing yourselves, ask some residents to bring you to the worst affected area and start the transect walk from there. If time allows, ask the residents to sketch a preliminary map of the affected area, showing the destroyed and surviving infrastructure, most vulnerable areas, and important landmarks. Using this map, the animators can plan and conduct a walk through the community to observe the impact of the disaster and talk to people about their experiences.

If the team is large, it makes sense to divide into several subgroups. One option is for male animators to do the transect walk mostly with men and female animators to do it mostly with women. One person can act as guide to each group, but the main aim is for people to opt in or out of joining the group as it moves through the community, allowing flexibility of inputs and a range of points of view.

As the group progresses, it observes its surroundings and team members will ask questions about the things it sees related to disasters. For example, as they come upon damaged houses, displaced settlements, water sources or markets they can ask about people’s experiences and coping strategies.

**Purpose:**

* To gain an overview of the impact of the disaster.

**Time:**

* 2-3 hours

**Preparation:**

* Develop a checklist, print copies of the checklist, and have clipboard and pens for the note takers.

**Example of Draft Checklist**

What happened in this disaster:

- what was the order of events

- has anything like this happened before

- who was worst affected, why

- how are people coping

What are the main problems that people face now / what do people mention most frequently

Infrastructure:

- observe the condition of the flood or cyclone shelter or public buildings used for shelter

- roads, electricity, telephones, public buildings

Houses or Temporary Shelters

- estimate the number / proportion of houses seen that are severely/moderately damaged or not damaged, to get a rough idea of scale

- observe the damage to houses, and reasons for variation in types of damage

- observe current living conditions, construction materials, position of shelters, crowding

Water and Sanitation

- observe the quality, location and number of latrines and water sources.

- watch and ask people about habits for collecting and storing drinking water

Food

- watch people eating or preparing food

- observe their cooking pots and type of fuel

- see if there is any food for sale, what, ask about prices and availability

Livelihoods

- observe the tools and likely type of jobs available

- observe presence of cattle, livestock, poultry

Health

- the appearance of women, children, the elderly

- experiences of treatment or access to services after the disaster

**Participants:**

* One or two guide/s may accompany the group for as much of the walk as they have time for. As you move through the community, people will join in and drop out. Stop and talk to people along the way.

**Process:**

1. Preliminary Mapping

* Take the opportunity during informal meetings and discussions to sketch a map of the community, showing the key landmarks, places where people are living and areas most affected by the disaster. Sketches can be made in the earth, using sticks and stones or other local material, or on the floor with chalk, and transferred to a notebook later. If the means allow, have printed copies of a map sourced online.
* Ask which parts of the community are most affected, and which least affected, and plot a walk that takes you through both.
* If there is someone you wish to accompany you on the walk, invite them to join you and explain the purpose of the walk and how it will proceed.

When we arrived in the community, we went to the leader’s house and sat in his yard.  We explained the purpose of the visit – to assess the humanitarian impact of the recent conflict.  We drew a cross in the sand with a stick, to represent his house and asked him to draw the rest of the village.  The leader took the stick, and in discussion with a few of his family or friends who were present, he drew a rough sketch of the community: the road, a foot path, the areas where people live, the market, the river and the fields.  It took 5-10 minutes.  We then explained that we wanted to choose two random points to start and end our walk.  One man took a pebble, turned his back, and threw it onto the map in the sand.  Where the first pebble landed was the starting point, the second pebble was the ending point.  We set off on our walk with a guide from the community.

*Caritas Congo, Pool Region, Republic of Congo*

2. The Walk

* As you walk, observe the surroundings and ask questions about what you see. Try to keep moving, so that you are sure to reach the end point, and then stop at places of interest on the return walk. Ask open ended questions and refer to your checklist to keep the conversation on track. Some examples of open ended questions:
  + *What do we see here?*
  + *What happened here during the disaster?*
* On the return, decide where to stop and find out more. Talk to the families or passersby and ask them about what they are doing and what how the disaster has affected them. For example:
  + *Stop at the house of a particularly poor or high-risk family. Ask how they were affected during the disaster, and how they coped.*
  + *Stop and talk to people laboring, farming or carrying goods along the road. Ask about their livelihood activities and about how they were and are affected.*
  + *Stop at a water collection point, observe and talk to the people there.*
* Work in pairs, with one person concentrating on taking notes.

3. Consolidation

Return to the starting place (or to an area offering a bit of shade and privacy) and initiate a post-walk discussion with the team members, guide/s and community leaders.

* It can be helpful to use a simple map or diagram to organize some of the information gathered during the walk. The discussion provides an opportunity to ask additional questions, and draw out key learning on vulnerability to disasters.
* A diagram can be a table, with different areas of the community on the horizontal axis and different aspects of disaster risk on the vertical axis. Pictures can be used as much as possible.
* Ask whether people think any important information has been left out. Remember, read the energy and interest of the group. Keep the session brief and to the point.

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| Families sheltering here.  Crowded with temporary shelters. 4-5 tube wells not flooded, in constant use. | Normally paddy, now water-logged. Cattle standing deep in water, some animal carcasses. | Homes close to water destroyed.  Water was 6 foot deep, now 3-4 feet.  Erosion along river bank | Water-logged. Poorer families lived here, signs of extensive damage. Weak bamboo houses. | Flooded.  Canal wall crumbling and collapsed in some areas. | Mosque and school used as flood shelters.  Better off families live in raised houses raised, thick walls, iron roofs – not damaged.  Small kiosks selling bananas etc but not rice available. |

*Adapted from CBDRM Field Practitioner’s Handbook, ADPC*

4. Conclusion

Summarize why the walk has been useful: we have learned what happened, how people living in different areas of the community are affected in different ways, how they are coping and what are the immediate needs.

* Thank people for their time and sharing their knowledge, and explain the next stage of the needs assessment.

(*Adapted from CRS PRA RRA Manual*)