

# Community Economic Mapping

## **Outline:**

### General Questions

What is a Local/Community Economy?

Why is a Healthy Local Economy Important?

What role do individuals play in a healthy local economy?

What role do businesses and other community assets play in a healthy local economy?

### Individual and Community Capacity

Mapping Individual Capacities of the Locality/Community

Mapping Community Capacities of the Local Economy

Mobilizing community and individual capacities

- Identifying Potential Import Substitution Activities
- Social Systems: Health, Education, Environment, Social Welfare
- Bulletin Board
- Survey Research
- Workshops
- Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) Tools
- Participatory Rural Analysis (PRA)

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## **What is a Local/Community Economy?<sup>1</sup>**

- ❖ A local economy is one in which local people are working.
- ❖ A local economy is one in which local people own local businesses.
- ❖ A local economy is one in which local people make their purchases in neighbourhood store.
- ❖ A local economy is one in which local people and businesses make investments in the community.
- ❖ A local economy is one in which dollars and energy recirculate among the local people.
- ❖ A local economy is one in which local people are active and connected.

## **Why is a Healthy Local Economy Important?**

- ❖ In a healthy local economy, money circulates and recirculates, producing benefits retained within the community, making local people better off in more ways than just monetarily. There are spinoff reductions in crime, poverty and other social ills, and increases in health, well-being, education, social infrastructure and quality of life.

## **What role do individuals play in a healthy local economy?**

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<sup>1</sup> John Kretzmann and John McKnight. A Guide to Mapping and Mobilizing the Economic Capacities of Local Residents. Acta Publications, Chicago. 1996.

- ❖ Individuals are the engine that makes a healthy local economy grow. It is individuals, working independently and collectively, that form the fabric of community life. It is the skills, abilities and experiences of these individuals that can be mobilized to develop a vibrant local economy.

In each characteristic that we will learn in this process of understanding local/community economies, it is local individuals focusing their efforts locally that is the central defining feature.

Local individuals can assume many roles in the local economy. They can be the owners of businesses, employees, educated consumers of locally produced and locally sold products,, they can be investors in local property and projects, they can share their experience, skills and knowledge with others. In terms of volunteer and associational activities, they can work together in community building efforts.

### **What role do businesses and other community assets play in a healthy local economy?**

- Businesses provide employment for the majority of the people.
- Fixed assets can be used in times of emergency, disaster, etc.
- Buildings can be used as centers for learning and training.
- Empty lots can be used for food production, livestock raising, composting, etc.

### **Individual and Community Capacity**

This community mapping process will identify both individual assets as well as community assets. Thus it has two phases:

- Mapping Individual Capacities of the Locality, and
- Mapping Community Capacities of the Locality.

We begin by mapping the individual capacities of the locality.

### **Mapping the Individual Capacities of the Locality and Community**

One important part of promoting a healthy local economy is discovering the individual talents and capacities are possessed by the people living in the community.

There is much more than what you might think in terms of individual capacities hidden among the local residents. Most people do not announce their individual capacities beyond offering them to employers when looking for a job, in volunteering, or in sharing them with family members. We might even think that we don't have anything to offer to the community. In fact, we all possess many capacities in the form of life experiences, skills, knowledge, abilities, education and work experience.

Some individual capacities are ready to be mobilized, all that's needed is an outlet and the necessary capital to get it started. For other capacities, some expansion and development may be useful in order to mobilize them. A developing capacity is no less valuable than one ready to be activated, for it represents future potential. A healthy community economy recognizes individual capacities at various levels of maturity. It

works not only toward mobilizing fully-developed capacities, but in developing each individual's capacity to their full potential.

### Process:

The individual capacities of residents living in the community are the single most important community asset. The following is a step-by-step plan for finding, identifying and building an inventory of collective individual capacity. The main steps are:

- Defining the local geographic boundaries and target community.
- Select a capacity-mapping method.
- Targeting the individuals and groups you want to include.
- Designing the individual capacity inventory.
- Meeting with all community members to identify their capacities.
- Assess and organize the information that is gathered.

Do not think that the completion of this section will be the end of the process! It's not easy to think of, or even know, all of our existing and potential capacities. We will thus consider some methods of making this part of the ongoing process of community economic development. Shall we begin?

### **Defining the local geographic boundaries and target community.**

Some communities have clearly-defined boundaries, and so identifying them will be a relatively easy process. However, most communities are not islands in themselves. Rather, they trade extensively with nearby communities, thus blurring the boundaries. Perhaps an individual lives in one community yet works or owns a businesses in another. Thus we need to consider both geographic and social boundaries.

Defining these boundaries is a group process. Start by generating a map of the community, either from official maps or from drawings made by the group. Each person must have the right to agree or disagree with the boundary. However, by the end of the meeting, everyone must agree with the boundary, or at least, agree to disagree and accept the demarcation.

Secondly, identify the social community as a whole and any neighbourhoods located within it. Is each neighbourhood in the map represented by at least two individuals in the group. If not, do the best that can be done and organize a second meeting at which representatives from each neighbourhood attend. The main question to consider is: are there individuals or groups of individuals who live outside of the community but work in the community? If so, they should be a part of this process. Next, identify all groups and associations in the community, and note their locations on the map or on another sheet.

The map should then be broken into pieces so that the representatives of each neighbourhood or section have their own little map which corresponds to the large 'master' map.

### **Select a capacity-mapping method.**

The method you select will depend on the extent of your organizational resources. Ideally, methods 1 and 2 will be used in the short-term, with method 3 as part of the on-going process.

### **Method 1: The Individual-Administered Method**

This method involves one or two people going house-to-house to conduct the capacity inventory in person.

### **Method 2: The Group-Administered Method**

This method is one in which you conduct the capacity inventory as part of a workshop, association meeting, gathering or other public event. Participants are asked to fill out the capacity inventory questionnaire themselves. In local currency systems, meetings usually start with self-introductions, where participants say their name, what they have to offer (one good and one skill) that they are selling or willing to teach, and one thing they are requesting. Fast note-takers can build an inventory quite quickly this way.

### **Method 3: The Bulletin Board Method**

A bulletin board is put up in a public space where community members can post notes under various categories for what they are offering or requesting. Categories can be pre-set by the organizing group, or can be determined after notices have been posted.

### **Targeting the Individuals and Groups you want to include.**

Now that you have your map with its full and neighbourhood boundaries drawn it, and decide which methods you wish to use to gather the information, it's time to decide how to target the individuals and groups that you want to include.

Those responsible for each neighbourhood should break the neighbourhood down into areas, perhaps according to Rt/Rw (neighbourhood/sub-neighbourhood boundaries in Indonesia, used for neighbourhood administration and security purposes). They can then spend one or two days in each section of the neighbourhood.

Using the information on groups located within the community, arrange for meetings to be held with groups to conduct the capacity inventory questionnaire.

### **Designing the Capacity Inventory**

A Capacity Inventory can be designed in many ways to focus on the particular dimension of individual capacities that will help your organization achieve its goals. Since most individuals possess many capacities, it is easy to create an inventory that is too complex. It may be better then to consider breaking the inventory into stages, with the first inventory gathering general information and a subsequent inventory focusing on specific areas and other details.

Although our focus here is on individual capacities that can be mobilized in the short, medium and long-term as part of a community-based economic development program, we are not suggesting that you overlook other individual capacities that may not at first seem "marketable" but which may contribute to development of other social, economic

or environmental goals. In designing the capacity inventory, the following areas should be considered:

- general skills and capacities,
- work experiences,
- self-employment experiences,
- education and training,
- religious or civic involvement in the community,
- Questions related to financial and basic needs.

The following general information items should be included in your capacity inventory

### **Conducting A Capacity Inventory**

As you prepare to make contact with the individuals in your community, you will need to develop an introduction that explains your organization, the work that it does, and why it is building this inventory. It should be brief, but tell the people you are talking to all of the information they will need to know in order to help make them feel comfortable about talking about the following questions with you. Before you write this, you should think about how much people already know and understand about your organization. Is it well-known in the community? Does it work with other organizations or belong to a larger network? How you answer these questions will help you prepare your organizational introduction. At minimum, your introduction should include:

- The name of your organization, the area it serves or the people it represents.
- The origins, goals and aspirations of your organization.
- An explanation of the project you are doing and the purpose of your visit.

### **Developing Questions About the Individual Asset Capacity Inventory**

The following are questions you may wish to ask as part of your capacity inventory. You may wish to add questions or remove questions from the suggestions that are made below.

#### **General Information**

1. Date
2. Location. Write the address down or draw the location on the map.
3. Primary Contact. Write down who you spoke with.
4. Number of individuals staying at the home.

#### **General Skills and Capacities**

- Do they have experience working in any of the following areas: Agriculture, Business, Building Trades, Crafts, Clothing, Construction, Caregiving, Children, Education, Entertainment, Environment, Health, Fishing, Food, Household, Language, Livestock, Personal Care Transportation, Volunteer, Woodworking.
- Things they can produce at home. They must already be in possession of the capacity (ie. a seamstress must have a sewing machine), whether or not they are already producing these items or performing these services.

## **Work Experiences**

- Are they currently employed?

If yes: -what do they do?

-would they like to improve or change their work?

-what kinds of changes would they like to make?

-what kind of assistance would help them to make these changes?

If not: -record how many are working and how many are not in each household.

## **Self-Employment Experience**

- Have they ever run their own business activity?

If yes: -what did they do?

-what were/are their main products?

-how is business?

If no: -do they think they are opportunities for self-employment in this community?

-are they interested in starting a business? what kind?

-what kind of assistance would help them to accomplish their goals?

## **Training or Education Experience**

- Do they have any experience in the categories listed above? If so, then ask about their experience.
- How many years of school did they complete?
- Have they ever apprenticed in a trade, or learned new skills on the job?
- Have they ever studied trades or taken courses? If so, what did they study?
- What skills would they and those in their home most like to learn?
- What skills do they or those in their home have that they would like to teach others?

## **Religious and/or Civic Involvement in the Community**

- Do they belong to a church or masjid or other religious organization?  
-If yes, then where? How often do they go?
- Do they belong to clubs associated with a religious organization? If so, what?
- Have they participated in community-based activities such as:  
-Community festivals or markets?
- Have they ever been involved in the organization of religious or civic activities?
- Would they be interested in helping to organize any particular community activity?

## **Questions Related to Financial or Basic Needs**

- Are they and/or others in their home making income sufficient to provide for the basic needs of everyone living in the home?
- What they spend most of their money on. Try to identify 3-5 major expenses.
- Something they would like but cannot access.

## **Statistical Assessment of What Is Learned**

When the process of meeting with individuals throughout the locality and community is complete, you will have a list of the individual capacities that exist among the members of your community. You can then organize this information in different ways that will enable you to tap into these capacities in your future community-based economic development efforts.

Keep the information that you have learned in a safe place, as you will need to return to it after the second portion of your study, which is the mapping of community capacities of the local economy, is complete.

For now, statistical information combining all of the information learned can be collected. For each question in the questionnaire, determine how many people responded to each question. Gather numbers so that you can identify percentages. Use the following guide as an example.

### **Statistical Community Asset Map**

- Total Population of the Community

### **General Skills and Capacities**

- How many people are employed in each of the following areas? Agriculture, Business, Building Trades, Crafts, Clothing, Construction, Caregiving, Children, Education, Entertainment, Environment, Health, Fishing, Food, Household, Language, Livestock, Personal Care Transportation, Volunteer, Woodworking.
- List the things that can be produced at home.

### **Work Experiences**

- List the number of people that re they currently employed? Identify what work they do by category, for example by using the categories above.

### **Self-Employment Experience**

- How many people have ever run their own business activity? In what categories did they run businesses? What products or services were/are offered?
- How many people think there are no opportunities for self-employment? What kind of business would they like to start? List what kind of assistance they think would help them be self-employed (ie. capital assistance, material assistance, training)

### **Training or Education Experience**

- How many people have any experience in the categories listed above?
- How many years of school did they complete? (ie. 0-5 years, 5-7 years, 7-10 years, 10+ years)

- How many people ever apprenticed in a trade, or learned new skills on the job?
- How many people ever studied trades or taken courses? List by category.
- What skills would they and those in their home most like to learn? List by category.
- What skills do they or those in their home have that they would like to teach others? List by category.

### **Religious and/or Civic Involvement in the Community**

- How many people belong to a church or masjid or other religious organization? List by where.
- How many belong to clubs associated with a religious organization? If so, what?
- How many have participated in community-based activities such as:
  - Community festivals or markets?
- How many have ever been involved in the organization of religious or civic activities?
- How many would be interested in helping to organize any particular community activity?

### **Questions Related to Financial or Basic Needs**

- How many are making an income sufficient to provide for the basic needs of everyone living in the home?
- What they spend most of their money on. List by expenses.
- Something they would like but cannot access. List by category.

### **Mapping Community Capacities of the Local Economy**

The second phase of the development of a Capacity Inventory is significantly easier than the first phase, because it does not require meeting with everyone in the community, only identifying businesses and other community capacity.

Representatives go into their neighborhoods again and mark the following on sheets of paper and at the same time on their map:

- The locations of occupied and empty businesses, market areas.
- The location of all public assets such as schools, buildings, parks, empty lots, empty homes.

At the same time, they must also identify the name, type and address of all businesses and buildings.

### **Conclusion: Combining the Results into a Community Asset Map**

Now that all of the information has been gathered, it's time to combine all of the information onto a series of maps. The map should include all homes, business, parks, buildings and other fixed assets identified in the research and found in the environment. The map of the community area should be duplicated so that there is a master copy available in case extra copied need to be made (providing for errors that require the map to be started again).

### **Individual Capacity Asset Map**

Assign a number to each of the forms corresponding to each household, and mark this household on the map. To this map, add the information compiled into the Statistical Community Asset Map. The group may decide to go into detail at a later time, but for now no further work is necessary.

### **Community Capacity Asset Map**

Assign a number to each of the forms corresponding to each business and mark the location of each business on the map. Assign a color to each category of business (try to keep the category list small) and color each business. Make a legend identifying the categories and colors in a free space on the map.

Mark all other assets, with their respective color or symbol on the map. (ie. market, park, clinic, school, building, station, organization building, office, etc.

### **Mobilizing Individual and Community Capacity**

Now that the map and statistics are complete, we can now turn to identifying and mobilizing these assets and capacities.

### **Identifying Locations for New Economic Activities**

Identifying locations that are appropriate for initiating activities by individuals requires that we look for empty land and business spaces on the map. Is there room for starting new activities in these locations? Can buildings be constructed in these locations? Can existing buildings be used for a clinic or training center? Are some of the spaces large and convenient enough to hold markets? Are some spaces designed for agriculture, livestock raising, composting or recycling? These are some of the questions you will want to consider in identifying locations that can be used to implement new activities. In addition to reading the following section on Promoting New Economic Activities below, you can also read Part Three on Establishing Community Based Economic Systems for determining which system can be used to promote which activity in a particular location.

### **Promoting New Economic Activities**

We know the knowledge, skills, abilities and needs of the people in our community. We also have identified locations where these activities can happen. Let us now look at some ways of promoting activities in these areas.

From your Individual Capacity Statistical Report, you will see a number of items which people spend most of their money on. List these items on a sheet of paper. Can any of these items be made locally? Are there people with the skills to train others to make, or perform, these goods or services? Identifying potential local import substitution activities is essential to designing a program for mobilizing community assets.

### **Promoting an Exchange of Knowledge and Skills**

Perhaps there is a large demand for skills training in particular areas. You know which people are capable of training others in these skills, and those who want to learn these skills. A community currency system is an excellent way of recognizing the contribution

of the teacher, and the commitment by the students to produce goods and services for the benefit of the community. The transfer of knowledge and skills can take place in any of the locations that have been identified. In Senegal, for example, a school was constructed by people wanting to learn construction skills. The trainers were paid in community currency. The workers were paid in community currency, and also had to pay for their training and so their accounts balanced out about even. However, they were able to put those skills to use on other building projects.

### **Promoting Self-Employment Activity**

From the Individual Capacity Statistical Report, you know which people already have experience in starting and managing businesses. Do those businesses produce goods or services that are in demand in the community? Can existing community assets be used to make those activities happen?

Exchanging knowledge and skills is may also be needed, and so both may work together in giving everyone the skills they need to start and manage a business. Was a potential market space or a number of spaces located on the map? This is a good place to use as an outlet for the goods and services produced through the activities.

### **Some Suggested Activities**

#### **Training Center**

A training center can be used to bring people together to learn new skills. These skills can be directed at a productive activity for which the goods can be sold, generating income not only for the school but also for the students.

#### **Composting Center and Chicken Farm**

Food and other organic waste can be brought to an empty lot and used in the raising of chickens and ducks. In addition to reducing the amount of mixed garbage (organic and inorganic waste), and the amount of burning, the chickens eat the organic matter, producing rich soil which can be sold to farms to increase the quality of the soil. The eggs and meat can be sold as well. This method of composting is called "sheet composting with fowl".

#### **Recycling Center**

Various inorganic wastes can be turned into new production inputs. Tin cans, for example, can be melted easily and reused in the production of metal goods. Glass can also be melted and reused in the production of dishes. Plastics can be separated and non-usable plastic can be compressed and disposed of safely, rather than being burned which releases toxic chemicals into the environment.

Unwanted and broken goods can be brought to the center and either repaired and re-sold to the community, or used as parts in producing other products.

#### **Repair Center**

Vehicles, motorcycles, machinery and other equipment are in constant need of repair. This is another good training business that will increase the useful life of expensive products.

### **Community Store**

Goods produced by the community in their homes can be sold through a community store. Some items can be purchased in bulk and sold at a cheaper price than through a regular business. You must determine if this will help the community economy by creating a new business, or hurt it by reducing the customers to other locally-owned businesses.