



TRANSECT WALK

What is it?

Transect walks are a participatory learning tool done with local people to understand key challenges and assets in the community. The participants define a path that often cuts across the community, and they note observations and talk with community members along that path.

Purpose

To explore the community's conditions by observing, asking, listening, and looking. Transect walks are used to verify information from the community mapping activity and can support building a community map.

Visiting one or two households on the transect walk helps to get a glimpse of what the 'norm' is in the community such as seeing what the community grows in the gardens, whether it is common for fathers to work in the city, mothers to work in the garden, and mothers-in-law to be primary caretakers of children at home, etc. Understanding typical health and nutrition practices will allow programme implementers to familiarize themselves with the needs of the community.

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Preparation

Materials: Pen/pencil, notebook/clipboard and paper; community map (if available)

Approximate duration: 1 hour

Facilitators: At least 1 experienced community facilitator (speaks local language)

Community members: 1-2 community health workers/community leaders/volunteers who are familiar with the locale

Conducting the Activity

1. Walk with the group to a boundary of the community as defined by the community members you are with and walk in a straight line across to the opposite boundary of the community.
2. Along the way, write down observations:
 - materials the houses are made of,
 - what the community gardens look like,
 - what the water sources and latrines look like,
 - where young children play,
 - etc.
3. The group can decide to pause and talk with one or two households along the transect walk to gain some more information about the community and talk to the adult household members.

Take notes, for example:

- household assets and resources
- observations of some of the food preparation and feeding, childcare, hygiene and sanitation and health practices, and environment in the household.

These observations and notes can also be written down by the facilitator after leaving the household.

Sample Training Exercise

1. Ask if anyone has done a transect walk. Ask one person to describe how it is done. (If no one has done this, explain it yourself.)
2. Ask the group to brainstorm on what they would look for when doing the transect walk. For example, your project may be focused on addressing child malnutrition. It would be important to look for key reasons why a child in the community may not be growing well. It would also be important to see if there are positive assets in the community to support good nutrition and the growth of children. You can ask the participants to review key reasons for poor nutrition (i.e. not enough food, too many children, mother is gone all day, father is not there, not enough money, diarrhoea, sickly, disabled, unclean water, worms, no shoes, grandmother tries to help but doesn't always give good advice on practices). These are some things for them to look out for during the transect walk. See Table 1 for some positive practices to look out for during the transect walk.

Table 1. Examples of Positive Feeding, Caring, Hygiene, and Health-seeking Practices

Feeding	Caring	Hygiene	Health
Continued, frequent breastfeeding of infants up to 24 months	Positive interaction between child and others	Use of latrine cover	Complete immunisations (preventive)
Introduce other foods at six months	Supervision at all times	Hand washing with soap or ash after toilet, before eating, before food preparation	Mosquito nets used in malaria endemic areas
Feed 3-5 times/day	Father providing attention/affection	Safe water (boiled, covered)	Regular deworming, wearing of shoes
Variety in food; giving snacks between meals	Grandmother supports caregiver with good advice and practical care	Use of drying rack	Home treatment of sick child for minor illnesses
Caregivers talk to child and make eye contact while feeding	Family members sing and play with children to stimulate learning	Keeping kitchen clean	Use of oral rehydration solution during diarrhoea
Continued breastfeeding along with appropriate liquids and foods during and after diarrhoea	The home is a safe environment for children to play	Using windows and doors to air out the rooms during the day	Children with disability referred for rehabilitative services and feeding support

