

Conducting a Basic Community Assessment

Objective: The objective of a community assessment is to determine the general ways in which your community operates. What are the challenges, issues, benefits, and so forth that are found within the community? The things you find out about your community help identify any gaps that are present as well as the key individuals in an area that you will need to work with or try and establish a relationship with in some way. Each place you go in the world will be different, and one village may be drastically different than another though they are only a few miles apart. This short paper will show you how to conduct a community assessment and collect the data that will be used at a later time. Keep in mind that this is a general guideline and that it can be added to or changed to fit your situation.

Key Things to Remember: This can't be done as a questionnaire. You need to observe and filter the things you see, hear, and experience so as to collect the information needed. Imagine you are like a detective and need to examine the situation with an eye to the community on both a large and small scale. Never go in thinking you have all the answers and solutions. We are aiming at partnering with these people to help them become all God has desired for them and their community. Be humble in your approach.

How to conduct the Assessment and Tips to Consider: The assessment will have questions and then a section for answers. Some of them might include an explanation of the information you should include. When you are looking for some of this information it helps to try and find certain people that will know many of the answers you are looking for. The first group we call "gatekeepers". These are people of influence in the community and are called this because they can open doors for you to have access in areas you would otherwise not be allowed in to. This might be a pastor, a chief, a business leader, or any other type of person of influence in the community. The second group of people are called "early adopters". These are people always interested in the new thing and are willing to talk and try it out. They will often know what is going on in the community because they are often the most attentive. Just remember not to talk to people as if you are giving them a survey. Through normal conversation and experience you will know many of these answers. Make yourself familiar with the assessment questions and it will often occur to you in conversations or out on walks that the answers are right in front of you. Always try and get the information you use from multiple sources and from different strata of society. It will ensure you do not get only one side of the story. Ask questions that elicit more responses such as "Can you tell me more about that?" or "How does that make you feel?" "What did you do then?"

What To Do With All The Data: This is the fun part! Once you have collected all the data then it is time to get to work, preparing strategies through prayer and discussion on how best to meet the needs of the target community. Because every location is different, the strategy will differ each time. What is important first and foremost is to know the situation and use this assessment tool as a starting point. Once you return with the data we can all get together to share, pray, and discuss the findings.

Assessment Questions - Use Extra Space if Needed

1. Who are the gatekeepers?

Name	Title	Contact Information

2. What assets does the community already have, even if they are not being used? These might or might not be material assets. _____

3. Who are the early adopters?

Name	Title	Contact Information

4. What are issues that seem problematic in their health care? _____

5. Do women have clearly defined roles in the community? What are they? _____

6. Do men have clearly defined roles in the community? What are they? _____

7. How much does a typical family earn in a day? A week? A month? What is that in US Dollars?

8. Do you see evidence of failed projects? Do you know why they failed? _____

9. What is the main occupation in the area? Do men or women do this job? _____

10. What do local residents see as the primary needs for this community? _____

11. What positive developments do you see in the community? Negative developments? _____

12. How do the children look? Are the parents attentive? _____

13. What faith group(s) is/are predominant? What services are they providing and to whom?

14. What services are local public agencies providing, and to whom? _____

15. What are the basic demographics of my community? (Consider income levels, races/ethnicities, number of youth.) _____

16. What are the various intervention strategies being used in the community to address the issues, if anything? _____

17. Are community members ready for a change in the issue(s) we are trying to address? What seems to be holding them back? _____

18. Are there barriers to accessing services, education, etc? What are they (finances, location too far, no transportation, don't believe the service is helpful, distrust, etc) _____

19. Have others (gvt, aid organizations, etc) been there and tried to do things? How did that turn out?

20. Tell of one or more families and their story. _____
