Briefing note: Transect walk

The transect walk will ideally last for between 30-45 minutes, and whilst it is up to you to decide the best route to take, a good option is to start from one water source and walk to another one that the community uses. The purpose of the transect walk is to:

1. Get a feel for the village and surroundings, including the layout and distances between water sources, levels of wealth, occupations, the physical environment, etc.
2. To ask questions about the life in the village, and to relate what you discovered during the participatory mapping exercise to what you are seeing on the walk
3. To explore water management, access, and use in the village, including the history of the main water point.

Procedure

Step 1: Assemble a group of volunteers. These will most likely come from the participatory mapping exercise you have just conducted. However, be wary of taking up too much of any one person's time. Describe the purpose of the transect walk to the group. Mention that you would like to take notes and use your camera to capture images as you walk. Explain that this is only to help you remember what you have seen, and ask permission to do so.

Step 2: If you are starting from the main water point, ask questions concerning peoples' perceptions of it and enquire about its history (see appropriate briefing note). Walk through the village asking the participants to lead the way to the next water point you have decided to visit. Gather information whilst walking, by taking note of what you see and asking questions to do with how people manage, access, and use water in the village, as well as other issues and points of interest you may come across – such as who lives where, who does what, who owns which crops/land, what is life like in the village, etc. Take pictures of the water sources and other places and features of interest.

Step 3: While walking, you may want to relate what you are seeing to what was drawn on the map and identify differences between the two. Discuss any differences with participants and attempt to understand why you may have observed these differences.

For example, if on the map the river is only drawn as a very thin blue line but when you arrive you find that it is actually quite wide (even if dry), enquire why this may be. You may find out that it is because people no longer use the river much because they now have other water sources, meaning the river is not as significant to the community as it once was.

Step 4: At the end of the exercise, the researcher should thank the participants for their involvement. As soon as you have time to yourself, capture any insights and reflections you have about the process.