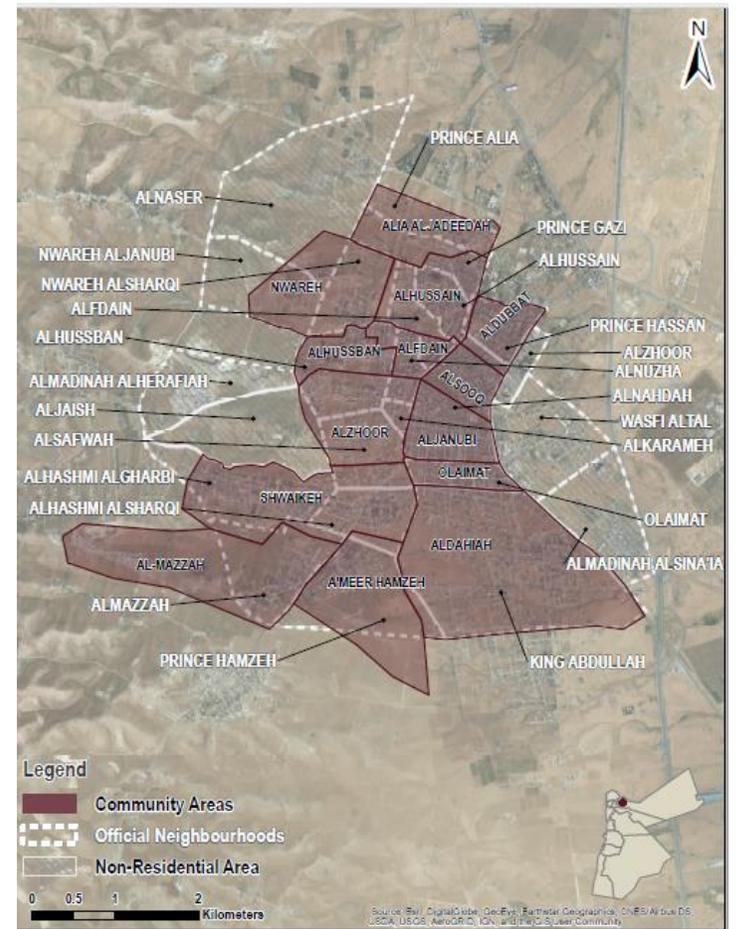


What?
Administrative boundaries, be it in urban or rural areas, are in many cases **not reflective of the real community structure/dynamics and of the actual community boundaries**, which correspond to a **Community area** rather than to an Administrative Area.

While administrative areas are defined by official boundaries, community areas are defined by their very own inhabitants as they share common key characteristics and a feeling of belonging to the area, which is delineated by **shared boundaries based on these commonalities and perception**.

Why?
 When supporting communities affected by crises, **gathering a strong understanding of communities' structure and dynamics**, beyond the official administrative boundaries, **is key to enable better identification of needs and capacities and allow a more effective aid response**.

Areas, when endogenously defined through a **participatory mapping**, offer the opportunity to apprehend a territory through local lens and adapt the response to needs and capacities of its inhabitants. A key first step towards an adapted, context specific and relevant humanitarian response is thereby to identify community areas, delineating its boundaries through a participatory process. A **participatory mapping** allows to **identify the boundaries** of such area, but also to **identify people that have the best knowledge about the area**, providing an "area-based" joint understanding between international actors, local stakeholders and the populations.



Mafrq city: An example of the difference between Administrative and Community areas resulting from AGORA's MFGDs' in Mafrq - Jordan



1. How to prepare a MFGD?

OUTPUT: The objectives of the exercise are clear & shared among stakeholders, operational set-up is ready

A successful participatory mapping exercise needs preparatory work to ensure discussions are well oriented, participants are chosen properly and the overall objective is clear to relevant stakeholders. **Key steps include:**

1. Conduct **background research** on the area, and set up a **goal** for the MFGD (*what do we want to delineate/clarify through the MFGD?*)
2. Contact the authorities to inform them about the exercise and ask for the **official boundaries** and updated maps of the area if existing
3. Draft a **question route** with the field team: questions need to be contextualised, adapted to the participants, easy to understand and leading to defining a "community area"
4. **Contact participants:** they should be representative of the community, mainstreaming age, gender and diversity. Keep in mind group dynamics (if a community leader is present for instance) and take mitigation measures to ensure all voices are heard
5. Prepare **equipment** for projection of maps or print maps including key landmarks (ex. mosque, church, schools, hospitals, etc..)

Checklist for MFGDs:

What do I need?

- ✓ **Locations** where to hold MFGDs / schedule adapted to the participants (after work?)
- ✓ **Question route** ready and maps with landmarks (on paper or to be projected)
- ✓ Local committed **staff** (male & female) who can dedicate several days in a row for MFGDs, including one facilitator and one note taker

Case study from Mafrag - Jordan:

MFGDs were organized a day in advance, and took place in Community Based Organisations offices. Since participants were at ease with reading Mafrag city map, it was projected on the wall. In other contexts, alternative methods should be foreseen such as walking around the area and doing a live-delineation. In some areas, MFGDs had to be held in the evening to ensure all participants (ex. Jordanian men, working during the day) could join.

Tips:

- Brief the team on WHAT you are after – use role play to ensure its well understood by all staff
- Contact CBO/local NGOs to ask for support in identifying participants
- Plan for a pilot to test the question route
- Adapt the set-up to the participants: are they map literate? Are they able to read/write?
- Make sure you brainstorm with your field team about terminology: how to translate community? Area? Neighbourhood?
- Attribute unique code to the notes and maps related to the area identified.



2. Mapping an area: how to identify features & boundaries?

OUTPUT: The Boundaries and features of each community area are defined by participants

Key steps for the roll-out of the MFGDs include:

1. **Invite your participants** (max 10 people) to the venue
2. **Clarify the MFGD goal**, explaining that this will have no implications on assistance. Respond to any question on how this information will be used, your organisation and ensure all participants feel comfortable in taking part to the exercise before starting
3. Conduct the **MFGD question route**, ensuring the participation of all attendees
4. **Facilitate the discussion**, and make sure that by the end of the MFGD participants agree on boundaries, even if it takes time

Tips:

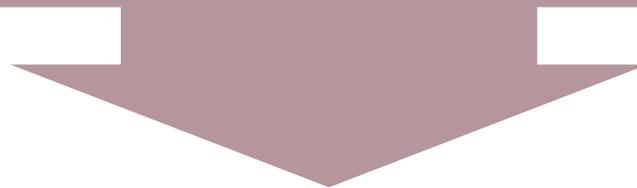
This phase must be carried out carefully as final results depend on how well questions are asked allowing inhabitants to draw boundaries of their area.

- Clarify MFGD goal and the fact that it will not lead to provision of aid
- Max. 10 participants
- Do not disclose boundaries identified in previous MFGDs
- Make sure all participate and value everyone's input
 - Several rounds with different group of people may be needed to enable all participants to freely participate (ex. men/women, refugees/locals, etc.).
 - Note-takers should pay particular attention to the dynamics in place/differences between groups (for instance if there is a community leader attending, people may feel shy to contradict him) and put in place mitigation measures for a strong representativeness of all groups.
- Build trust (avoid international staff attending MFGDs)
- Debrief field teams every day to fine tune the question route and the set-up of MFGDs.

Example of question route for Mafraq:

While projecting or showing the map(s), ask the following questions:

1. "Identify the location(s) and recognize or add key landmarks on the map"
2. "Where do you access daily services like barber, school or cafés?"
3. "What is the name of your "Mintaka" (neighbourhood in Arabic), your comfort zone?"
4. "Are there any differences between inhabitants of your Mintaka? (Income? Ethnicity?) ?"
5. "Where does it start to be different?"
6. "Until where you can talk on behalf of your neighbours?" (sharing same daily issues, having same needs and opportunities) – "show the boundary on the map"





3. Data Analysis phase

OUTPUT: Community areas are delineated and their key features are identified.

Once finalised the MFGDs, you can pass to the analysis phase. Key steps include:

1. Compile results from all MFGDs and **look for overlapping of boundaries.**
 - If there is a good saturation of data (everyone showed same boundary) then proceed with the mapping of the area
 - If there is no data saturation, conduct complementary interviews with inhabitants as well as internal discussions with local staff to reach the data saturation point
2. When mapping the areas, look for common patterns: periphery/core, density of population, street connection, access to services, etc.

N.B. This exercise can take up to a full day or more depending on the zone to be mapped and it needs to be done with field staff who carried out the MFGDs.

Tips:

- GIS (Geographic Information System) software are good to compile MFGD results
- Tracing paper is as well an option
- Beyond boundaries, try to keep track of community specific features
- Make sure the staff that conducted MFGDs are involved in the mapping phase

Final result

The final output is an **area or city/settlement map and profile**, enabling a more contextualised understanding of the area(s) as a basis for a targeted and relevant aid response.

Disclaimer Please keep in mind that MFGD is one way to map and identify areas, among others. This document needs to be contextualised and tips have to be utilised based on the context at stake.

This paper has been produced in the framework of a 2 years' programme, implemented by IMPACT Initiatives and ACTED within the framework of their joint initiative AGORA, funded by the US State Department and in partnership with UNHCR. This program aims at field testing a methodology for assessment and analysis of out-of-camp refugee settings. Read more on impact-initiatives.org/agora

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