

Discovery

Understanding the Needs in the Community



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Discovery

By Bill Crooks and Jackie Mouradian

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Introduction

The Objectives of this toolkit

1. To gain an initial understanding of what the needs are in the community from participants' own experiences of living and working in the area.
2. To construct a map of all the needs in the community and to prioritise them in order to gain a picture of the area.
3. Using the problem tree, analyse some of the causes and symptoms of the top priorities to gain a better understanding of the needs and also to identify what further information needs to be gathered to get a better understanding of what needs to be done to address them.
4. By the end of this toolkit, the participants should have identified at least two to three priorities which, if appropriate, could be explored further in the next toolkit.

About The Packs

There are four key sections in this toolkit:

1. Photo parade

This encourages participants to take pictures of things they value and are concerned about in their community. It is ideally best done before the mapping exercise so the photos can be placed on the map as part of the discussion on understanding the needs of the area.

2. Community needs with pictures

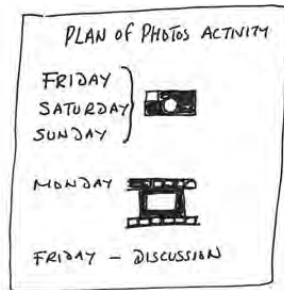
This helps participants reflect on the needs of the community using picture cards. These cards could also be used with the mapping exercise.

3. Mapping our community

This is a really useful resource for a group to visually brainstorm what they see as the key needs in the area and prioritise them. This can be done in individual peer groups or interest groups and then combined into one big map.

4. The Problem tree

This is an essential tool for analysing the root causes and symptoms of a particular identified need and is useful for deciding the most appropriate activity a church and community could do to address it.



Activity 1: Photo Parade

Purpose:

To help participants understand the value of gathering information in small groups and simple techniques for doing this.

Contents:

- Step by step guide
- Tips for running the session
- Question sheet

Step By Step Guide

Step 1: Provide disposable cameras for the group and brief them on using them

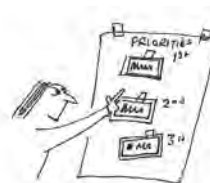
Step 2: Agree a time span for taking the pictures and a date for meeting up again with the developed pictures.

Step 3: Lay the developed pictures on a table and group them into themes



Step 4: Discuss each theme and identify key issues

Step 5: Identify the top 3 priorities which the church and community could respond to



Tips for running this exercise

Time required:

Brief the group for 10 mins

Group to take photos individually

Review photos and discuss - 45 mins

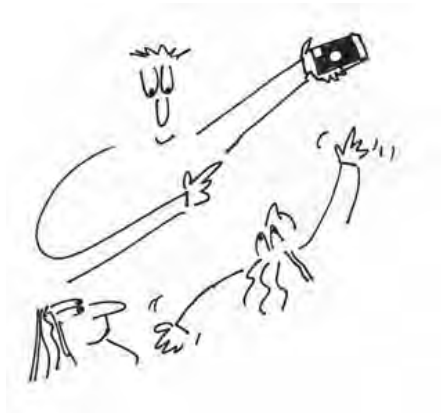
Materials required:

disposable cameras

flipchart

pens

developed photos



Tips: Bring along some examples of photos to give people ideas of what they could take – buildings good and bad, different social groups, activities

Suggest that the participants go out in pairs so they can discuss together what pictures to take and if necessary seek permission to take the photos.

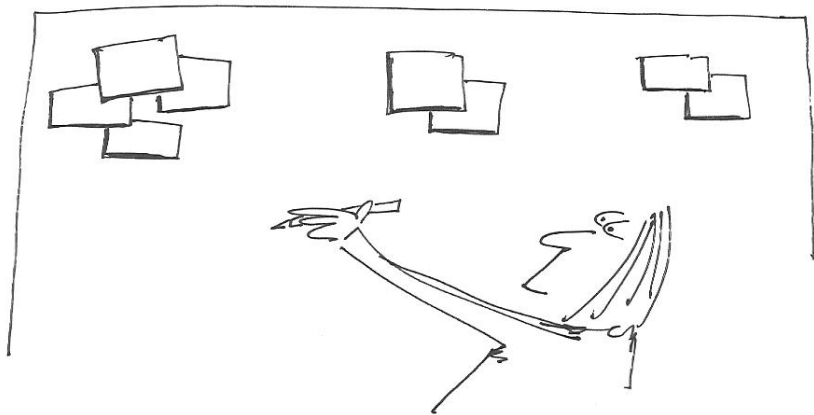
In debriefing the photos it can be useful to lay them on a map of the area so the group can relate to where they are from. This activity could be combined with the mapping exercise to enhance the information gathered.

Not everyone is comfortable taking photos so another option would be for one person to take all the photos and get people to select the photos according to their perceptions. Alternatively use community needs with pictures pack



Questions

- Which photos show opportunities?
- Which photos show physical needs?
- Which photos show social needs?
- What do the photos tell you about the community?
- What might be the root causes of the problems identified in the pictures?
- Rank the photos in order of most importance
- Prioritise opportunities for the church to be involved



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Activity 2: Community Needs with Pictures

Purpose:

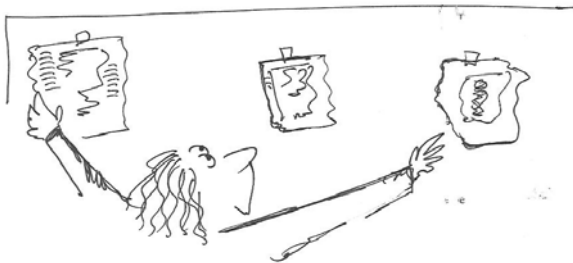
To help participants reflect on community needs through the use of picture cards. This activity is useful for thinking across a range of needs and then exploring them in more detail through focus group discussions or interviews. These problems can be identified in more detail through the problem tree.

Contents:

- Step by step guide
- Tips for running the exercise
- Spiritual reflection

Step By Step Guide

Step 1. Print off the community needs cards from the disk and place them around the room. Use the blank ones for any other issues you think of. Alternatively, you could use these pictures in the mapping exercise



Step 2: Give everyone a pen and 5 post-its and get them to stick post-its on the issues they feel are most important in this community

Step 3: Count up the post-its and see which are the top 5 needs identified in the picture cards

Step 4: Discuss as a group why these are the most important and what examples are there in our community

Step 5: Think about ways in which the top issues could be checked out and analysed further either through focus groups with specific members of the community and/or through the problem tree (see problem tree)



Tips for running this exercise

Time required: 45 mins

Materials: Post-its, marker pens, flipchart for ranking, masking tape

Tips: An alternative to printing off the cards from the disk would be to use pictures from newspapers or magazines.

Place the top 5 pictures on a flipchart in order of scores and on another piece of flipchart paper write down the examples in the community for each picture.

If you want to use these with the problem tree select the most important pictures and place them in the middle of the problem tree and analyse its symptoms and causes. Having discussed the examples it should be fairly easy to move to discussing symptoms and causes.

This exercise can be used to help the group think through any other needs they could address that they had not thought about before going on to plan a project in detail.

Spiritual Reflection

Looking at all the community needs represented on the cards, cluster them into common themes, eg crime, education, the elderly, youth.

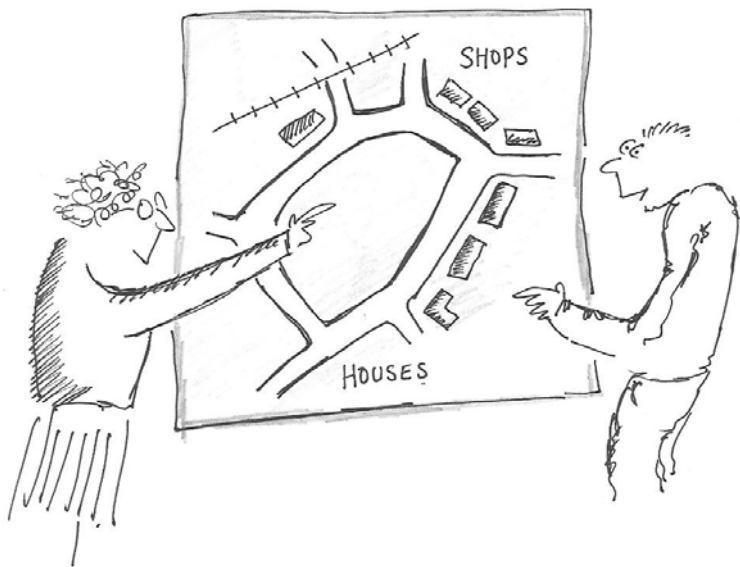
Take each theme and write some prayers specifically for that area, which include names of those who are trying to make things better

Invite members of the congregation to pray for these themes in pairs or triplets over the next few months.

The prayers can then be typed on card and laminated and distributed to the small groups who are committed to pray for these areas.

When you gather the harvest of the land, you are not to harvest to the end of the field. You are not to gather the gleanings of your harvest. You are neither to strip your vine bare nor to collect the fruit that has fallen in your vineyard. You must leave them for the poor and the stranger

Leviticus 19: 9-10



Activity 3: Making a Map of our Community

Purpose:

To help church and community members reflect on the needs and issues in their community. This activity is a useful way to identify key areas to follow up in more detail.

Contents:

- Step by step guide
- Tips for running the session
- Worked examples of maps
- Brown community needs cards
- One packet of yellow counters for ranking the issues
- Question cards
- Spiritual reflection

Step by Step Guide

Step 1. Put some large tables together and put together 4-6 pieces of flipchart on which to draw a map

Step 2. Mark on the map in marker pen, the main roads, rivers, railways

Step 3. Mark on the map key buildings such as shopping centres, churches, pubs, clubs, etc.

Step 4: Discuss and mark on the main areas of need or concern to the community

Step 5: You can use the brown community needs pictures to illustrate the map



Step 6: Use the yellow counters to rank the identified needs. Give each person 10 yellow counters and they choose how many counters they put on a specific need

Step 7: Count up the yellow counters per issue and see which are the top 5 priorities and list them on a flipchart



Step 8: Of the top 5 priorities listed discuss which of the 5 can be done by the church and/or community

Step 9: Spiritual Reflection

Tips for running this exercise

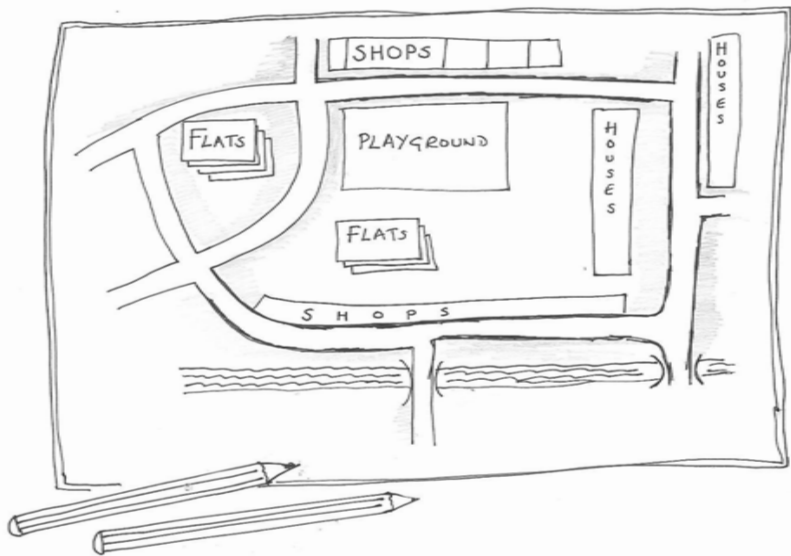
Time required: 45 mins -1 hour depending on the size of the group

Materials: Marker pens, plenty of flipchart paper, masking tape to stick the flipchart paper together, crayons to highlight and colour the map, community needs pictures.

Tips: If there is a large group, subdivide it so there are smaller groups working on a number of maps. Bear in mind this will demand a longer time for feedback. Sometimes it's quite useful to divide the group according to age, gender and marital status eg, young people, pensioners, single mums and asylum seekers. It's best to draw the roads and communications on first as this helps to locate other items on the map.

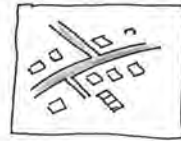
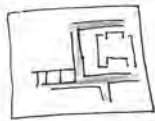
Before looking at the needs on the map it can be useful to look at what areas they are most proud of or appreciate, but this may have been covered in Pack 1, Celebrating where we live. To enhance this activity even more you can encourage a group to take some photographs of their community with disposable cameras. The map can become an important source of planning in the future so if possible, put it in a place where people can see it and add to it.

Worked Example No 1 - More worked examples using the pictures and counters can be printed from the disk

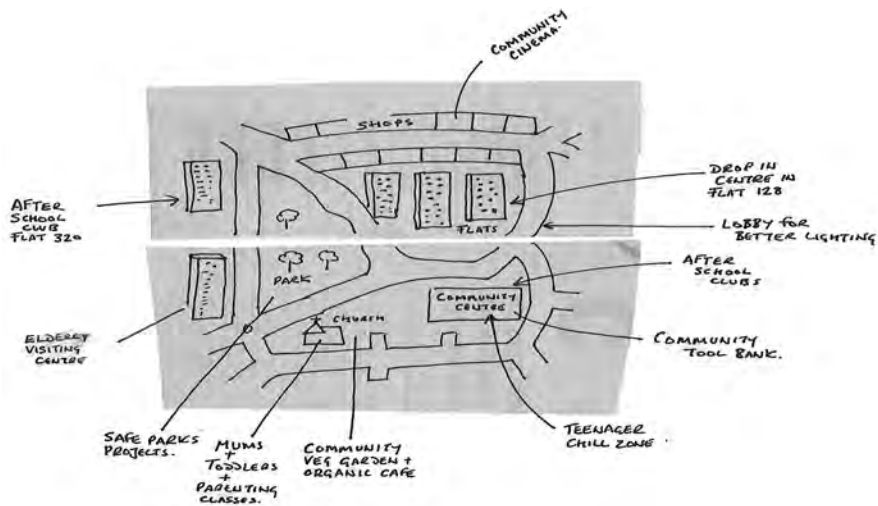


Peer Group Maps

Another way of doing this exercise is to give different peer groups the task of drawing a map of the same area which will give you 3 different perspectives and insights into the needs of the community.



Using the map as a community action plan



Once the map has been analysed and discussed, a final version can be produced as a way of visualising what initiatives could be done in the community over the next one to two years. This can be placed somewhere prominent in the church or community centre to raise awareness.

Questions

1. What are the areas which score the highest from the ranking?
2. Which of the top 3 priority areas could we address as a church and community?

Spiritual Reflection



Place a candle on each of the areas of need or concern on the map you have drawn.

Light the candles and pray for each of these areas one by one.

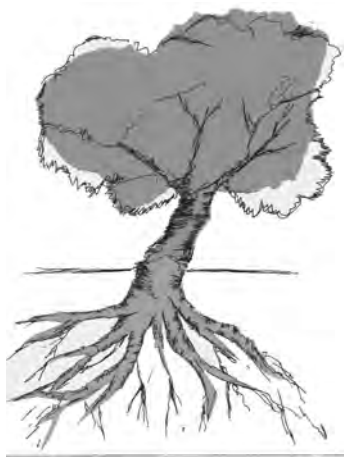
John: 8 vs 12

'When Jesus spoke again to the people , he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Matthew: 5 vs 16 'Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your father in heaven'

Jesus calls us to reflect his light in this dark world - to give hope to the hopeless

I will hold the Christlight for you
In the night time of your fear
I will hold my hand out to you
Speak the peace you long to hear



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Activity 4: The Problem Tree

Purpose:

To help church and community members analyse a problem that they have identified in order to work out what sort of response they could make which is appropriate to their knowledge skills and capacity.

Contents:

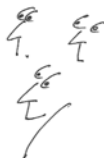
- Step by step guide
- Tips for running the session
- Question card
- Tree parts - roots and leaves
- Worked example
- Spiritual reflection

Step by Step Guide

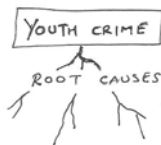
Step 1: Identify a problem that the group would like to analyse in order to respond to it

Step 2: Talk through the problem tree, explaining the difference between root causes and effects, using the template and worked examples that you can print from the disk. Also print off the leaves and the roots. 20 of each should be fine.

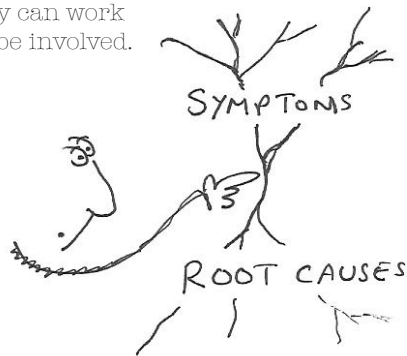
Step 3: Start to construct a large problem tree on the floor or wall by using the leaves which are the symptoms of the problem. Use post-its to write a symptom on each leaf.



Step 4: Build the roots by getting the group to think of one root cause per root. The way to find the root cause is to ask why this is happening.



Step 5: By looking at the symptoms and causes discuss where the church and community can work best and who else can be involved.



Tips for running the session

Find a big space on the floor or wall on which to construct the tree
Take plenty of time to explain the definition of effects and causes so that everyone has a good understanding of what's involved.

Use non-permanent marker pens for writing on the roots and leaves - or alternatively use post-its.

Make sure the writing on the post-its or leaves is large and legible. It may be a good idea for one person to do the writing.

When doing the roots make sure you ask the question “why” for each root cause as this will deepen the analysis.

Sometimes it's easy to feel that a community project should be addressing the root causes rather than the effects but this should be decided upon on the basis of their capacity and ability to run a project.

As part of this activity you can also brainstorm what other churches or agencies are doing with regard to other aspects of the problem tree, so that you don't duplicate.

Questions

- Which areas of the tree are other churches or voluntary agencies working with?
- Which part of the problem do you think we would be best suited to work with? (symptoms or causes).
- What sort of project could we do with our skills, knowledge and experience?
- Are there others we could work together with on this?
- What additional resources might we need to do this work?
- Would this project fit with the values and vision of our church?
- If no is the answer to most of these, maybe you need to take another issue and construct another problem tree.

Spiritual reflection

The woman who touched Jesus' cloak

Read Luke 8: 40-56



Questions

In what ways was the woman isolated in her own community?

Having done the activities in this toolkit, who would you say was isolated and marginalised in your community?

Jesus was on his way to Jairus' daughter but made space for this woman in her desperate need. Do we make space for others when preoccupied with other concerns? Jesus was surrounded by need and opportunities that day, and chose to heal this woman. How do we prioritise the needs we see and encounter?

Think about the problems you've identified using the problem tree. Jesus could see the woman's deepest need was peace and wholeness. What are the deepest needs of the people in your community? The woman took the initiative, in desperation and in faith, and Jesus responded. In what ways can we help the people in our community take the initiative to change their situation?

Reflections

Jairus was an important person in his community, the woman was considered unclean and was therefore isolated. As a result of this they had very different ways of approaching Jesus. Jairus was not afraid to ask, the woman was. This tells us that to really understand the deepest needs of our community we may need to dig deep. The most marginalised people will not necessarily come forward for help.

This story show us that in a world of huge problems, Jesus cares deeply for the individual. The woman just had to reach out - he responded, he valued her, he healed her and met her deepest needs. He does the same for us today.

When we look at all the need around us, it can be overwhelming, and we could feel a sense of guilt at what we are not doing. Jesus healed the woman - but he didn't heal everyone. Whatever we choose to do for others is important, it is closing the gap; it is Christlike.

Prayers

Jesus, light of the world,
you taught us how to reach out to others. Open our ears to the stories that beg to be heard. Jesus, light of life, enfold us all with your love and incline our hearts to the leading of your healing spirit.
Amen

Dear Lord,
We know you care deeply for our needs and for our community. Show us how our church can be a cloak of healing and peace for those in need.
Amen

Compassionate God,
As your outstretched hands held a crucified world, so let our hands convey the touch of love. As you embraced our vulnerability so cradle our hopes and fears. Reach out to our frailty, release our pain and in your tenderness bring healing to our brokenness, that in our weakness, we may find strength and in our poverty, the unfurled riches of your resurrection.
Amen



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