ECOSYSTEM MAP

An ecosystem map is a type of stakeholder analysis that can help uncover the existing gaps and highlights where there might potential synergies in partnerships. It gives you an overview and allows you to develop an overview of how all the different people and organisations relate both to your work and each other.

The ecosystem map is capturing all the key stakeholders that have an influence on those targeted to benefit from your work, those implementing, and the stakeholders in the wider implementation context.

The ecosystem map is built by first doing a stakeholder outline and then connecting them based on the type of value they exchange. These might include the people or commu¬nities you work directly with; the various bodies from which you receive (or are seeking) funding; or your own peers, local commu¬nities and even international support networks.

This exercise is in particularly useful in the first parts of the project cycle or for developing new strategies and plans.

Step 1

Identify target group and situation

In the team, start by agreeing on the key target group and situation you want to focus on. This target group and situation will be the centre of your exercise.

This could for instance be a specific community group who will benefit from a specific intervention or it could be a specific internal entity that needs a new strategy or plan for a specific area of work.

Face-to-face: This can be done in plenum.

Online: This can be done in plenum

Step 2

Individual stakeholder brainstorm

Now it is time to identify those stakeholders who directly or indirectly interact with the identified target group.

For example, it could be all the stakeholders who are currently involved in service delivery to the identified community target group or those stakeholders who the internal entity are currently engaging with in relation to the given topic or area of work

INFORMATION

PHASE
MOBILISE

TIMEFRAME
120-240 MINS

MODE
BOTH

PARTICIPANTS
2 - 10+

FACILITATION LEVEL
MEDIUM

MATERIALS
A3 TEMPLATE PRINTOUT, A3 PRINTOUT OR A FLIPCHART, MARKERS IN DIFFERENT COLOURS AND SMALL STICKY NOTES, TIMER

you wish to make a new strategy or plan for.

Ask participants to note down all stakeholder relevant to the given situation they can think of on a sticky note by themselves in silence. They can make use of experiences, call a colleague, search the internet - there are no limits. By doing it in silence, you can minimise bias and you get everyone to bring their knowledge to the table.

Give 10-15 mins for this work.

Stakeholders can be groups of people, organisations or individuals. To make the map as actionable as possible, avoid writing general groups like "private sector" or "civil society", specify who.

Examples of stakeholders:

- Communities we support (including vulnerable and/or excluded groups)
- Implementing partners
- Local organisations (e.g., Community-Based Organisations, thematic interest groups, youth organisations)
- Local change agents
- Institutions (Government, ministries, local authorities, institutes, etc.)
- Other humanitarian- or development organisations (IFRC, ICRC, other RCRC societies, UN, other INGOs etc.)
- Private sector actors locally, nationally, regionally and/or globally, e.g., manufactures or niche experts
- Co-workers, volunteers and management locally, nationally, regionally and/or globally
- Suppliers
- Academia locally, nationally and/or globally
- The media
- Thought leaders
- Religious leaders
- Donors
- Gatekeepers
- Intermediaries (e.g., someone acting on behalf of the chosen target group)
- Investors
- Key contributors and advisors

Face-to-face: This can be done in plenum.

Online: This can be done in plenum

Facilitator tips
As a facilitator continuously encourage participants to dig deeper when considering stakeholders. It could be actors having a stake in or operate behind the scenes on the given challenge, service, objective etc. This could be local government, local private sector, change agents or regional actors as well as the ones not directly involved with a service but that nevertheless have an impact, e.g., stakeholders providing products which are part of the service.

It can easily happen that participants only consider those who are best known through experience, forgetting what could lie outside of own experiences.

This exercise is therefore great to do in a team coming from diverse positions and contexts relevant to the challenge, service, objective etc.

Step 3

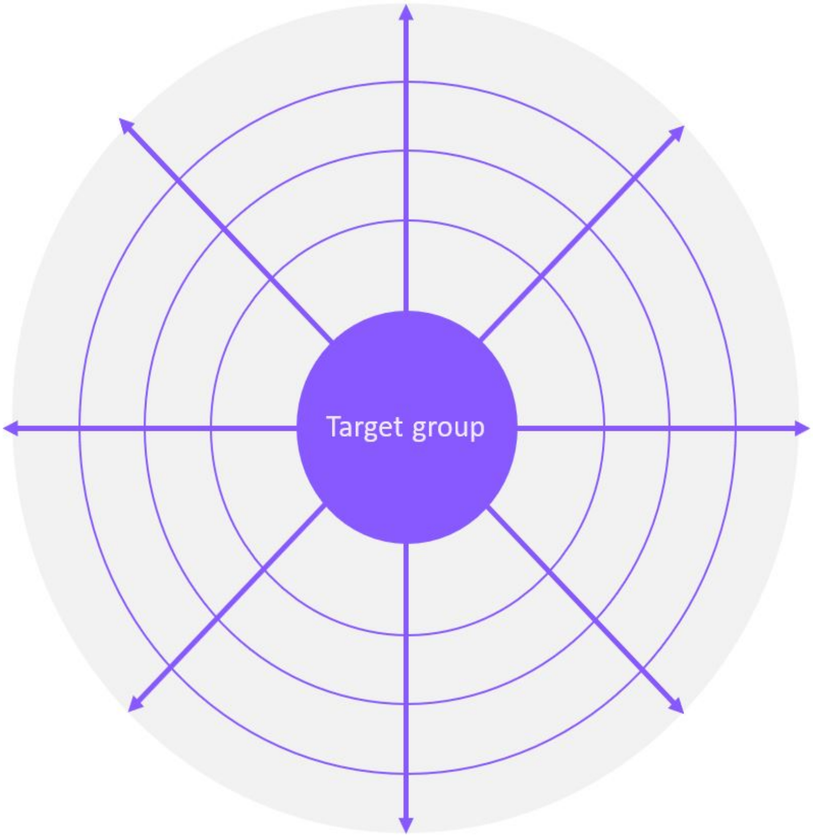
Sort stakeholders and place on map

With many stakeholders now identified, ask the team to sort the stakeholders by grouping them and consolidate any duplications. Give 10 - 15 min for this.

When stakeholders are sorted, place the chosen target group at the centre of the map (e.g., a specific community group in need or the internal entity) and then position the other stakeholders in the space around.
This is done by putting those stakeholders that have most importance for the chosen target group closest to the centre, based on the situation in question. When they are all on the map, start tracing connections between the target group and other stakeholders.

The objective is to understand the relationships between each stakeholder and target group as well as the relationships between stakeholders.

Give the participants 15-30 mins for this work.



[Example of filled map to be put in]

Face-to-face: Print out ecosystem map template and fill out the template. If in groups, have one template per group in A3 and a clean map template A3 or a flip chart to consolidate it all in the end. It is recommended that if you are more than 8 participants, to split into smaller groups.

Online: Use the Miro board to place the stakeholders, If in groups, have one template per group and a clean map template to consolidate it all in the end. It is recommended that if you are more than 8 participants, to split into breakout rooms.

Step 4

Uncover relationships

Now it is time to specify the relationship between the target group and the stakeholders chosen. This is done by colour coding the different stakeholders to represent the different kinds of relationship to the target group.

Categories could be:

- **Directly involved in the intervention:** Guiding questions could be: Who currently delivers a service to the target group addressing the need in question? What sectors do they come from? How do the target group perceive their importance to them?
- **Indirectly involved in the intervention:** Guiding questions could be: Who has indirect, but important, influences on the target group? Who are crucial intermediaries for the service delivery? Who funds current services? Who are enablers and advocates of the services?
- **Gatekeepers or interlocutors:** Guiding questions could be: Who are change agents? Are there someone in the target group households or in private circles who acts on behalf of the target group?
- **Minor direct involvement:** E.g., who are experts in the given field? Who else has the target groups obligations to that affects how they interact with the service? School obligations, job(s), household chores that are relevant for the intervention?

The above categories are suggestions. Feel free to use additional or different categorisations, just have colours enough to do the colour coding.

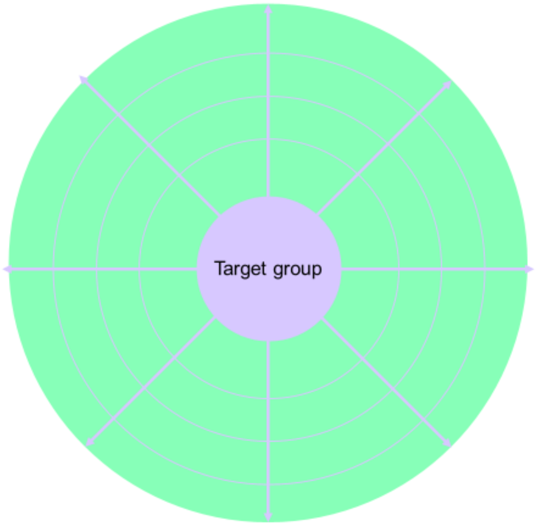
The objective here is twofold: 1) to uncover how the different stakeholders relate to the target group in question, how they do so and their importance to the target group; 2) how the stakeholders around the target group relate to each other and how (e.g., do they exchange money or information? Are they important to each other? Are they collaborators or competitors?).

To show relationships between stakeholders, lines can be drawn or it can be put on sticky notes.

Spend 15 mins to colour code the stakeholders.

Face-to-face: Use the consolidated map to colour code the stakeholders. If the group is not too big, do the colour coding in plenum. If it is too big, you can divide the stakeholders and do the colour coding in smaller groups. If you have split out, come back into the big group.

Online: Use the consolidated map to colour code the stakeholders. If the group is not too big, do the colour coding in plenum. If it is too big, you can divide the stakeholders and do the colour coding in breakout rooms. If you have split out, come back into the big group.



[Example of filled and color coded map to be put in]

Step 5

Is the map complete?

Spend 15 mins to take a step back and observe the map in plenum. Do you notice anything missing? Do you agree on the placing and the colour coding?

Keep note of observations emerging from the discussion and add them to the map if it can be agreed upon.

Conclude the ecosystem map.

Face-to-face: This can be done in plenum.

Online: This can be done in plenum.

Step 6

Identify opportunities and next steps

When the map is done, you and your team can now identify pain points or gaps in the map. This activity helps in understanding which aspects that need to be improved or further explored.

Based on these pain points and gaps, spend 30 min on discussing what your opportunities are for improving outcomes by exploring new partners.

Note down what concrete next steps you will be taking for follow up, including how to share the insights generated with other team members or relevant stakeholders.

Keep the map in the team after this exercise and add any new detail noticed on the map, for example using further colours or dividing the players in sub-sets.

This exercise can be followed by a power & interest stakeholder analysis, to better understand how the different key stakeholders identified in this exercise, influence your project or plans.

Face-to-face: This can be done in plenum.

Online: This can be done in plenum.