3. TRANSECT WALKS

Farmer harvesting semi-wild tuber-bearing plant, ‘Talas Hitam’ (Xanthosoma sagittifolium), West Sumatra, Indonesia. Photo: L. Pawera
3. TRANSECT WALKS

A transect walk is a walk along a defined path (transect) across the study area, together with key informants, to create a diagram that shows a cross-sectional view of the landscape. Transect walks are usually a starting point for other investigations and provide a useful preliminary to most of the other activities in this Compendium. They can also be used after the first exercises of participatory mapping in order to validate the information collected during the mapping exercises and can be used with seasonal calendars, timelines and other methods. During the walk, the following information can be collected:

- Topography and altitude (preferably using a global positioning system [GPS])
- Soil characteristics
- Cropping systems and major crops or crop types (e.g. orchards, arable fields)
- Livestock species and occurrence
- Type of wild vegetation (woods, marshes, shrubs)
- Population (houses, schools, community areas)
- Activities (grazing, foraging for wild edibles).

The discussions during the walk can cover any relevant topic, such as crop or livestock diversity, land management, land ownership, pollution problems, resource limitations and illegal cultivation or logging activities.

The data collected provide an overview of the main crops and animals in the landscape and of the availability of key resources. They provide an idea of the number of households and their location that can be helpful for conducting the household survey. The data collected will help in the formulation of hypotheses to be tested through the other methods described in the Compendium and provide some idea of the major problems faced by the community.

CONDUCTING A TRANSECT WALK

A transect walk is conducted by a facilitator or interviewer, note-taker and key informants.

Participants
The key informants should be knowledgeable about the environment, land uses and different activities in the landscape. Where possible, participants should include women and men and older and younger community members to provide different perspectives on the questions and issues raised.

Choosing a path
The facilitator should ask the local informants to name and list all the land uses (‘zones’) in the area, making clear that the exercise aims to collect information not only on farming systems but also on grazing areas, wild zones and other land uses.

Process
Before starting the walk, the facilitator asks the informants to name and list all the land uses (‘zones’) in the area, making clear that the exercise aims to collect information not only on farming systems but also on grazing areas, wild zones and other land uses.

As the walk progresses, the team should stop at every key feature and at the beginning of a new zone (such as residential, topographic, land use, cropping system) and record the distance from the last feature or zone. As an alternative, stop every 50 or 100 paces (or other suitable interval) and take note of whether the land-use pattern has changed.

The facilitator asks participants to describe features encountered along the path and to explain the key characteristics of the areas that they see. The discussion can be facilitated by asking questions about the details and by making observations. The note-taker makes notes of all information gathered and takes photographs or draws sketches.
The key questions that have to be asked when stopping in each zone are:

- What is this zone called?
- What are the main characteristics of this zone?
- What crops or animals are here?
- What activities are carried out in this zone? By whom?
- What is the land ownership – private, collective or state-owned?

After the transect walk has been completed, discuss and check the information and data collected. Where more than one transect walk has been completed, results can be combined and compared. The final results are a diagram (see example in Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2) and table (see example in Table 3.1).

In the table, the column heads list the different zones encountered, with information on altitude if available. In the left-hand column, list the topics of interest (plants, land use, problems, drainage system and so on) and then fill in the details of what was observed in each zone.

### Table 3.1 Example of a table used to capture information gathered during a transect walk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zones</th>
<th>Zone 1</th>
<th>Zone 2</th>
<th>Zone 3</th>
<th>Zone 4</th>
<th>Zone 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soil type</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water availability</td>
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<td>Trees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crops</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vegetation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Animals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Problems</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Opportunities</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### FURTHER INFORMATION


Figure 3.2 Diagram produced from a transect walk in Cachilaya, Bolivia. Source: Agrobiodiversity, Land and People Project, PAR. Illustration: F. Pasta