

A Participatory Mapping approach to Environmental Planning for Sustainable Community Development

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Indigenous peoples closely rely on land and its resources for their livelihoods and sustenance. The indigenous approach to land use is holistic; satisfying material, social, and cultural needs, with minimal negative impacts to ecosystems. In Guyana, the Low Carbon Development Strategy and the Green State Development Strategy both emphasise community stakeholder collaboration for achieving sustainable development, particularly for indigenous communities. Participatory mapping of customary land uses can empower indigenous peoples by helping them to claim access rights and to facilitate improved systems of land management. This study examined the use of participatory mapping to assess land use and aid community visioning at Pakuri. Landsat 7 images were obtained to facilitate community-based mapping of traditional land uses. Among the prevalent land use activities mapped across Pakuri territory were zones for farming, fishing, and crafting. Information from interviews and focus groups highlighted critical land issues such as resource depletion, soil fertility, and land underutilisation; as well as related social issues such as theft, limited infrastructure, and financing. The study demonstrated the usefulness of participatory mapping as a tool for eliciting rich local knowledge, and produced land use maps that can assist Pakuri with its community development goals.

Keywords: Participatory mapping; community development, indigenous lands