


PROBLEM TREE ANALYSIS

WHAT

Visualisation technique that helps to fully understand a problem. By doing this in a group you create a shared understanding of the problem at hand.

WHEN TO USE

- **Stage(s):** Preparation & setup, demonstration
- **Goal:** Think ahead & find solutions to address challenges/problems, plan & implement/apply knowledge
- **Type:** Systems thinking tool, participation and co-creation tool
- **Time & Effort :** 1 - 2 hrs 

HOW TO USE

- Works best in groups of 6-8 people, make sure everyone can see the flip-over on which you draw a tree.
- Step 1: identify the issue, all participants need to see this as a pressing issue they are willing to work on. Write this in the trunk of the tree.
- Step 2: write down the causes of the issue on post-its and put them in the roots of the tree
- Step 3: write down the effects of the issue on post-its and put them in the branches of the tree
- Arrange the post-its in a cause and effect logic
- The goal is to generate a usefull discussion on the topics. provide time and space to capture all causes and effects.
- Once the tree is finished, debate the different causes and effects. which ones are most impactfull? can be resolved quickly? how are they evolving over time?

PROBLEM TREE ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- Provides a shared framework for understanding an issue.
- Differentiate between the problem and its causes.
- Breaks down a complex problem in manageable chunks while maintaining an overview.
- Identify connections between causes and effects, leading to possible win-win scenarios .

WEAKNESSES

- Essential to have a good representation of different stakeholders in the group.
- Depending on the group it might be challenging for participants to share their ideas - in that case a facilitator is advised.
- Something can be a cause and effect at the same time, in that case make two post-its with the same item.

References:

Problem Tree – MSP Guide

D8_1_Problem_Tree_Analysis.pdf (eawag.ch)

Planning tools: <https://odi.org/en/publications/planning-tools-problem-tree-analysis/>

Step 1: Identifying the focal issue with 'Problem Tree Analysis' technique - YouTube