Problem Tree
For defining and understanding the issue

What is needed?

Time: 1 hour

Participants: groups of 5-6 stakeholders + 1 facilitator + 1 recorder

Material support: blank version of the Problem Tree (see overleaf), pens

❱ Identify a recorder who will be writing down the comments made during the brainstorming session.

Problem analysis is needed to make sure that a multi-stakeholder group is tackling the right issue - one that has been discussed and agreed with all stakeholders.

One well established technique for working with problems in a group setting is to make a problem tree. This is a simple graphical representation of the problems, their causes and effects

What for?

❱ **To list and classify** the problems to be addressed

❱ **To identify** some of the causes

❱ **To have a fresh & comprehensive understanding** of the existing situation

How to use it?

Step 1
List all problems that come to mind related to the main theme. (e.g. youth unemployment or lack of public funding). Problems need to be carefully identified: they should be existing problems, not possible, imagined or future ones. **The problem is an existing negative situation, not the absence of a solution.**

Step 2
Identify a '**Core Problem**' (which will be written on the trunk of the tree). This may involve some trial and error before settling on one.

Step 3
Determine which problems are '**Causes**' (write them at the level of the roots of the tree) and which are '**Effects**' (the branches).

Step 4
Arrange in hierarchy both Causes and Effects, i.e., how do the causes relate to each other - which leads to the other, etc.

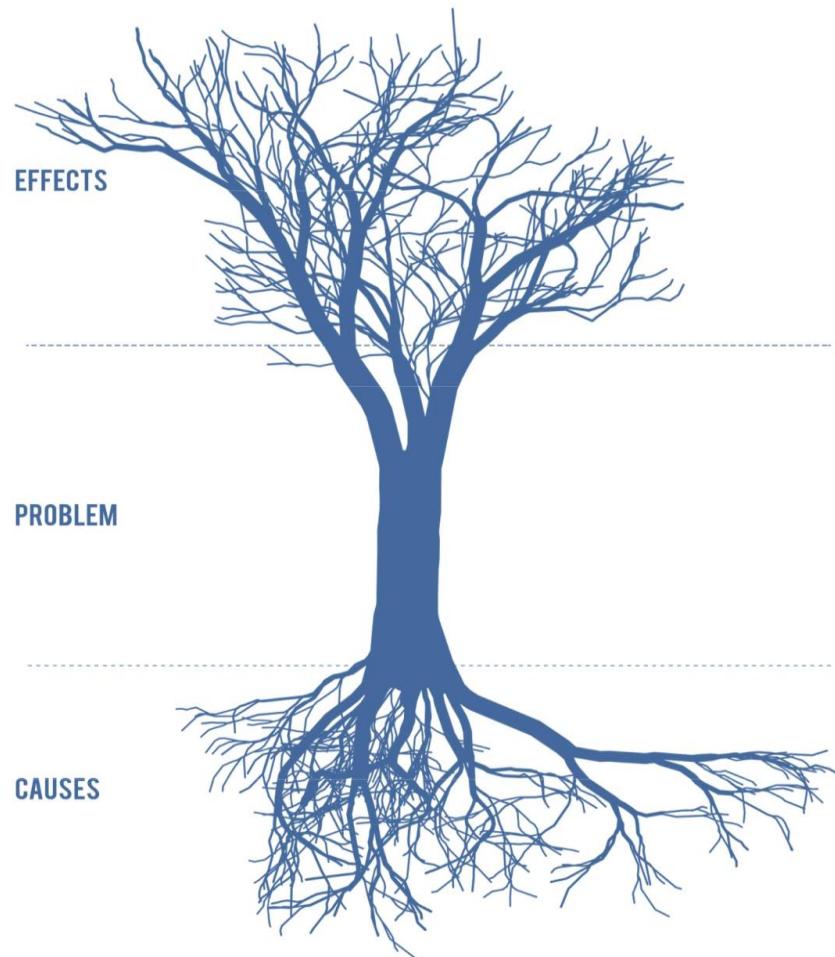*Go further in your problem analysis by using the Problems & Solutions table.*

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Problem Tree

EFFECTS

PROBLEM

CAUSES

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