

Tool 11: Problem tree tool

Phase	Phase 2: Where are we going? Vision and strategic objectives
Sub-phase	Sub-phase 2.1: Visioning and building consensus on key themes
Name of tool	Problem tree analysis
Objective	The objective of problem tree analysis is to understand the nature of problems or opportunities, their causes or roots and their effects. The analysis forms a strong basis for setting objectives.
Total time spent on this tool	The process of developing a problem tree normally takes half a day.
Under which circumstances to use the tool	The tool is very suitable to use as part of a participative process. It allows all participants to put forward their ideas and for them to be organized in a clear understandable manner. It helps build a strong foundation for later stages of the planning process.
Main actor(s) responsible	The team organizing the planning process should arrange the process. It is apparently simple, but should be led by a skilled moderator. It is easy for participants to play a useful role. It is important to engage stakeholders in the activity to ensure wide support for the issues being tackled.
Target / beneficiary	All stakeholders gain from a good process as issues can be put on the table at an early stage in the process.
Description of tool	<p>The tool maps out hierarchies of cause and effect relating to the main issues – problems and opportunities – facing a city or a community. It is most commonly carried out using cards and pin-boards, but can also be done using computer programs and Mind mapping (see Mind mapping tool). This description assumes that cards are being used.</p> <p><u>Step 1 Identify key issues.</u> Organize a meeting of the planning team with representatives of major stakeholders. This should be a key meeting in a planning process. All participants should be given 3 cards (or A4 sheets of paper cut into 3) and markers. In this meeting introduce the main issues facing the city based on prior research. Each participant writes on each of their three cards one of the three issues they consider most important for the city. They then pin their cards to sheets headed by the pre-identified issues or on sheets for “other issues”</p> <p><u>Step 2 groups carry out problem tree analysis focussed on the priority issues found</u> For each topic a group is set up to carry out the problem tree analysis. Each group should have a facilitator.</p>

	<p><u>Step 2a group</u> members write down what they feel the problems are connected to the main theme (for example, high unemployment may be the theme for a group). One problem (or opportunity) on one card – with large letters so that the group can read from a distance. (15 minutes)</p> <p><u>Step 2b preliminary problem tree.</u> The cards are placed on the pin board – grouped together when the same, and arranged so that causes are at the bottom and effects at the top. The aim is to identify the core problem in the middle. Additional cards should be added refining causes and effects. For example, unemployment could be influenced by poor infrastructure, poor education and training and also by external market conditions. (30 minutes)</p> <p><u>Step 2 c identify the core problem.</u> Try to identify the core problem and test it by applying the questions shown in table X below. Discuss and refine the core problem.</p> <p><u>Step 2d reporting and amalgamating</u> The teams report on their findings. The moderator presents the conclusions. Photographs should be taken of the final problem trees so they can be recorded as part of the planning process.</p>
<p>Advantages and disadvantages of this tool</p>	<p><u>Advantages (+)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Issues can be identified and agreed. + Root causes of problems are identified – which later become the focus of actions in action plans. + The method encourages inter-sectoral thinking and action. + Opportunities can be introduced as well as problems. + The effects are identified which helps in building political support for action. + It forms a strong foundation for objective setting. <p><u>Disadvantages (—)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – It takes time, organization and a good facilitator. – If not well facilitated it can strengthen pre-conceptions. – Focus tends to be on problems (it is, after all called problem tree analysis).
<p>Related tools</p>	<p><i>SWOT analysis</i> will already have brought up internal and external problems and opportunities. This allows logical cause/effect relationships to be thought through.</p> <p><i>SMART objectives.</i> Core problems can be turned into core objectives and then improved through use for SMART objective tests.</p> <p><i>Logical framework.</i> The logical framework uses the same cause/effect logic, so the problem tree analysis helps to set a good basis.</p> <p><i>Monitoring and evaluation tools.</i> These tools link back into</p>

	<p>objectives and problems and issues</p> <p><i>Stakeholder analysis.</i> Links to the questions of whose problem it is</p> <p><i>Mind mapping.</i> A tool to think through connections between subjects – can be used for problem analysis and also for planning.</p>
<p>References and further resources</p>	<p><u>Generally accessible documents:</u></p> <p>MDF (2005) MDF Tool : problem tree analysis, Ede, MDF.</p> <p>Roberts, B. H. (2015) Tool kit for rapid economic assessment, planning and development of cities in Asia, Manila, Asian Development Bank (ADB).</p> <p>UNCHS (1991) Guide for managing change for urban managers and trainers, (Training materials series) Nairobi, United Nations Centre for Human Settlements.</p> <p>URBACT (2013) Urbact II local support group toolkit, Saint-Denis, URBACT.</p> <p><u>Academic documents (access may be limited):</u></p> <p>None</p>