



STEP 1: DEFINING THE PROBLEM

To achieve change CSOs need to identify 'what' the specific issue is that they would like to see addressed and define the problem behind it. Defining a specific problem increases the likelihood of the problem being addressed, against a realistic, achievable timeframe, and within the resources available.

Using a maternal and new-born health context (as is the focus in E4A-MamaYe) as an example, civil society organisations could first identify a pathway to 'good' maternal health, based on participants' experiences in their communities and presentation of best practice. This sets the standard of what should happen, which can then be compared with what does happen in the real world. Evidence should also be collected on how gender inequality influences maternal and perinatal mortality. How for example, women's position in society has an influence on their ability to receive information and access health services. Evidence is presented from a variety of sources including the district and health information system (DHIS) and analysis of maternal and perinatal death surveillance and response (MPDSR) data to demonstrate the reality of MNH at the global, national, and local level as well as more qualitative analysis of power and gender dynamics at the community and household level. Following this, CSOs can adopt a 'problem tree approach': a tool that enables civil society to explore the problem that they want to address and identify its root causes.

TOOL: The Problem Tree

Problem Trees help find solutions by mapping out the anatomy of cause and effect around an issue in a structured way, with the aim to:

- Create more understanding of the issues that cause the problem (which are sometimes interconnected and even contradictory)
- Help establish whether further information, evidence or resources are needed to come up with a solution
- The process of analysis can help to build a shared sense of understanding, purpose and action.

In order to utilise a problem tree, a problem is written in the centre of a flip chart page and that becomes the "trunk of the tree". The causes of this problem become the roots of the tree and the consequences become the branches (see Figure 3: Problem tree).

Some questions that might be helpful whilst building the problem tree include:

- Which causes are improving, which are getting worse and which are staying the same?
- What are the most serious consequences and what criteria is important as we think of ways forward?
- Which of the causes are the easiest/ most difficult to address? What possible solutions could help?
- How are gender and other inequalities contributing to or causing the problem? Are the consequences the same for everyone or are they different for people of different genders, age, ethnicity, ability, etc.?

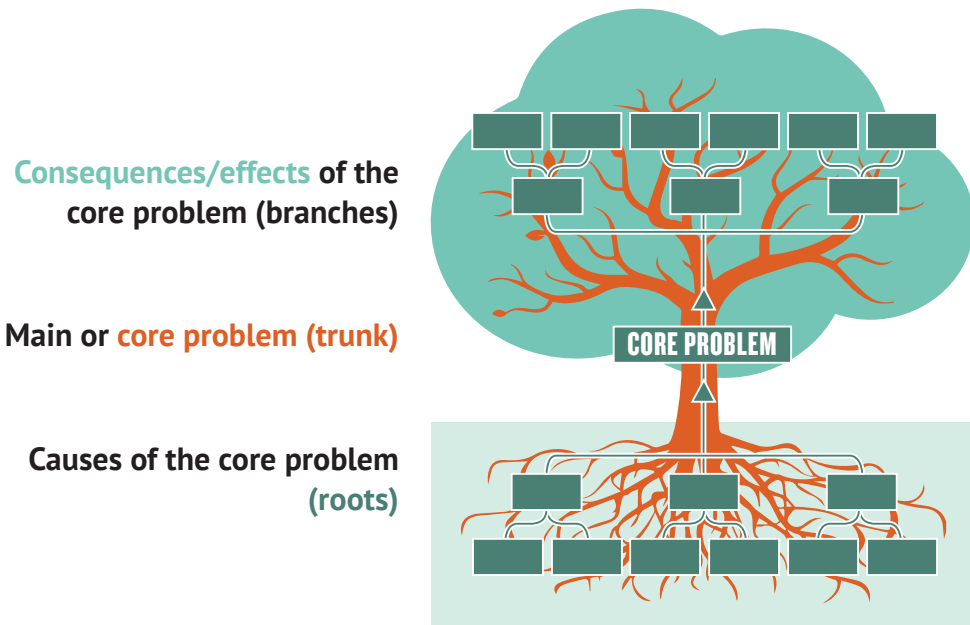


Figure 3: Problem tree

Consider involving those mostly affected by the problem in the development of the problem tree. For example, when speaking about maternal health, women and girls are probably well aware of what are some of the main causes and effects of the issue - their insights can be particularly useful for the analysis!

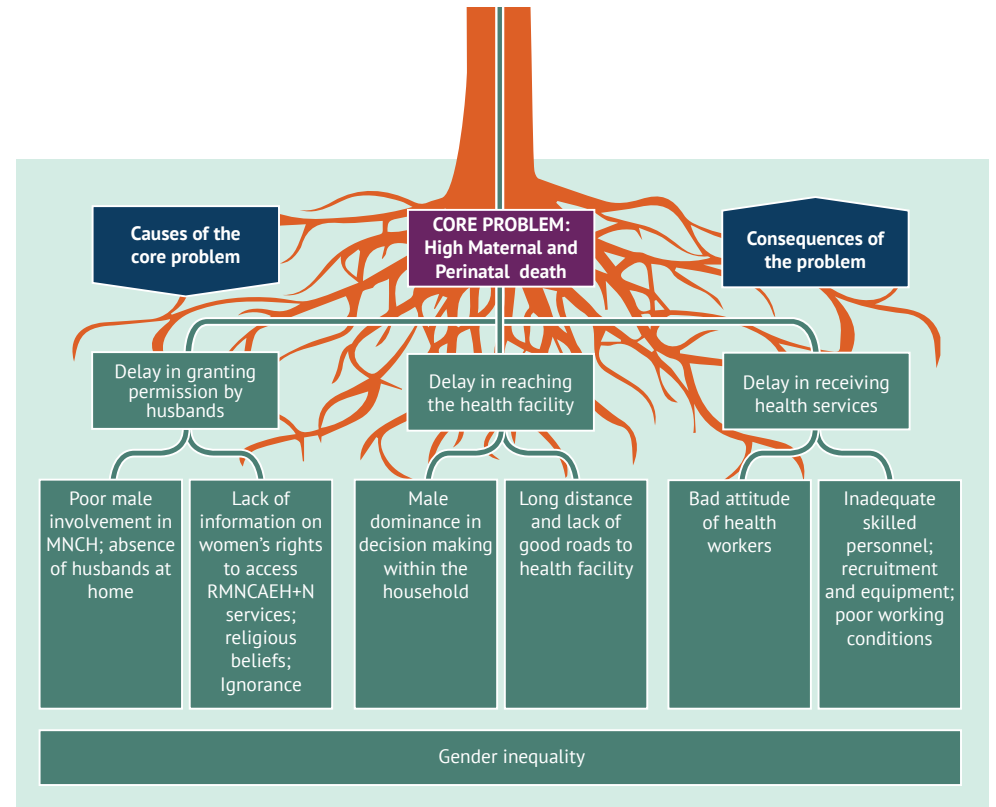


Figure 4: Example of problem tree developed by a coalition in Nigeria

