

Analysing Problems and Finding Solutions

Are you passionate about tackling complex social and environmental issues but unsure where to begin? A thorough analysis of the problem at hand is essential before setting your campaign's goals or planning your tactics.

Why problem analysis matters

Problem analysis is crucial for designing and implementing successful campaigns. It helps you to:

- **Understand the problem:** Gain a comprehensive understanding of the issue, its causes, and its consequences.
- **Identify root causes:** Determine the underlying factors that contribute to the problem and need to be addressed.
- **Set clear goals:** Establish specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals for your campaign.
- **Develop targeted strategies:** Design interventions and tactics that address the root causes and create meaningful change.
- **Evaluate and adapt:** Assess the effectiveness of your campaign and adjust your strategies based on your problem analysis.

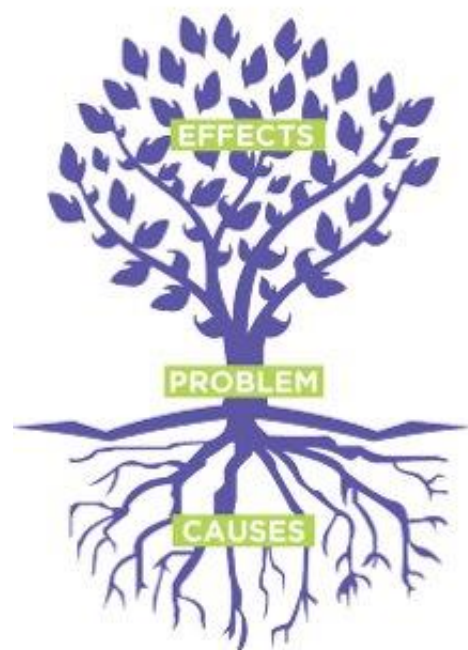
The Problem Tree

The Problem Tree is a visual tool that helps you analyse complex problems by identifying their causes and effects as well as coming up with potential solutions. Here is a useful video: [Introducing SMK's Problem Tree Planning Tool - YouTube](#)

Step 1 - Analyse the Problem

Begin by analysing the problem at hand and mapping out its causes and effects.

- **The Trunk (Core Problem):** Begin by identifying the core problem you wish to address. Write it down in the centre of your paper, forming the trunk of your tree.
- **The Roots (Causes):** Next, list the underlying causes of the core problem. These factors represent the roots of



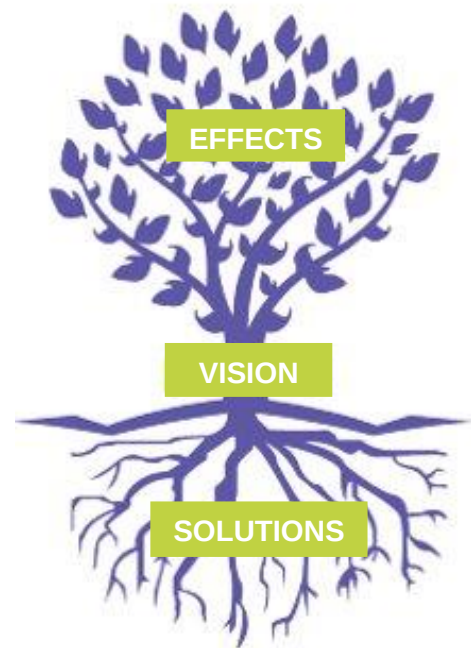
your tree. Connect them to the trunk, and feel free to dig deeper by identifying sub-causes for each root.

- **The Branches (Effects):** Finally, identify the consequences or effects of the core problem. These will become the branches of your tree. Connect each branch to the trunk and explore any secondary or tertiary effects by adding additional layers to your branches.

Step 2 – Identify Solutions

Once you have a clearer idea of the problem, you can create a new, solution-oriented tree identifying a vision in which this problem is solved as well as some potential methods to achieve this and the positive effects it would have.

- **The Trunk (Vision):** Identify the overall vision. This is the idealistic world in which the problem is solved.
- **The Roots (Solutions):** Achieving the overall vision may seem unattainable – instead, try to break it down by considering potential solutions for each of the causes. These solutions could become the overall objective of your campaign and would work towards the larger vision.
- **The Branches (Effects):** Map out the positive effects that these solutions could have if they are implemented.



The finished solution-oriented tree offers a visual depiction of the relationships between the core problem, its causes, its effects, and potential solutions. This comprehensive understanding of the issue enables you to develop targeted strategies and establish well-defined goals for your campaign. While it might not be feasible to address all the root causes, identifying one that you believe you can influence is crucial for formulating your campaign objective.

Have questions or need further support?

- Contact Sophie, the activism programme coordinator at sophie.l.birch@durham.ac.uk.
- Book a session to create your own problem tree or receive campaign support: [Book time with BIRCH, SOPHIE L.D.](#) (if these times do not work for you just email Sophie to organise an alternative meeting).
- For more information visit [Campaigns @ Durham SU](#)