Cause & effect tree (6.1)

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Description:	This is an analytical tool to get a better understanding of the root causes & effects of the challenges faced by communities.
Goals of the session:	Identifying root causes of problems and challenges, and the effects of these root causes in a participatory way – as a first step towards finding a solution.
Target group:	Community leaders, men and women, youth and children. Option 1: groups are mixed with a maximum of 10 participants. Except for the children who have their own groups (maximum of 10 children within one group). You can divide the children by age, groups for children between 8-13 yrs. old, and between 14-18 yrs. old. Option 2: all groups are separate (community leaders' group, men's groups, women's groups, children' groups) with a maximum of 10 participants.
Preparation time:	15 minutes.
Duration:	1-2 hours.
Materials:	This exercise can be done on the ground using local materials; flip charts and markers can also be used as alternative.
Copyright:	Freely usable.

Process

Ask the group to draw a tree with clear roots and branches. Write the main issue (for example: 'child labour' or 'child marriage') on the main trunk. This issue could have arisen during previous exercises, but you can also start with an open question such as 'what are the challenges in this community?'. Ask the group why the issue, for example 'child marriage', is happening. Write the things that are mentioned on each of the roots. These are the root causes. Do not settle for generic answers. Dig deep and try to find the underlying root causes. Ask why as many times as necessary to find out what the root causes of a particular problem are. After discussing the causes, ask what the effects are/can be as a result of the issue (e.g. child marriage') and write those on the branches. The group can add more branches or roots depending on the amount of root causes and effects they identify. When multiple issues are at play, multiple trees can be drawn with the issue written on the trunk.
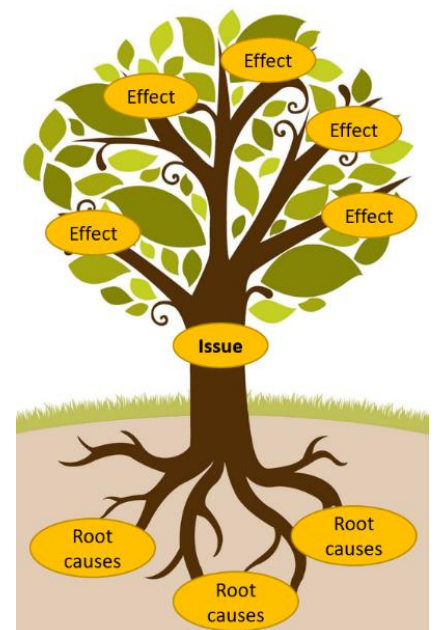
Reflection: after collecting the information, the participants can be asked how they feel about the issue, the root causes and effects and whether they think something needs to be done.

Important! Depending on the theme of discussion, it could be well possible that people look at things differently. One might not find issue A to be a problem, whereas someone else does. Or one may see the root causes differently from another person. These differences are highly relevant and should be recorded carefully. This information can be of great use later during, for example, the design of the Community Action Plan or any other intervention.

Additional exercise: the facilitator of this exercise can encourage the group after the reflection to suggest solutions to mitigate either (one of) the root causes or (one of) the effects. The group should thereby indicate who can take responsibility to address each of the identified issues and proposed solutions. This way, ownership of the issue (e.g. 'child marriage') can be enhanced.

For the children: the children should be in their own groups with their peers. You can specifically ask the children what challenges children face in the community. Follow the same procedure as written above.

Make sure that the results of all the groups are shared with each other.

For more tools and information, go to our [Participatory Toolbox](#).