

TOOL 3

Problem tree: Understanding problems, causes, and effects

Instructions

Choose the main problem related to NCDs that you have identified in your broader analysis. The problem tree exercise will help you break it down, facilitating discussion to co-create advocacy priorities. Create a problem tree by writing the central problem to analyse in the trunk (write it in the centre of a flip chart). Then list the causes by asking 'why?' to identify the different causes of the problem, and the causes of the causes. Write these onto sticky notes and stick to the roots of the tree at the bottom of the flip chart. Now list the effects or consequences of the problem, writing these onto sticky notes and sticking them to the branches of the tree at the top of the flipchart. After drawing your tree, examine the root causes of your problem and identify the areas in which advocacy is needed. Ask: Which causes of this problem can be addressed with advocacy? Which cause and advocacy action will you prioritise and why? Then study the tree branches – the effects or consequences of the main problem. Ask: If a root cause in the trunk is resolved through advocacy, how will that change the branches? Do the effects or consequences of the problem show who might be some of the stakeholders that could be interested in your advocacy work? Once you have completed your problem tree, you can convert it into a solutions tree, where you reformulate your root causes into solutions and the consequences into outcomes.

