Overview

Whilst helping us to analyse the situational context of a key need – and ensuring we have explored the root causes of the issue – this tool then helps us to decide and plan. This is because, as you will see, the root causes can be used to form objectives in a project plan.

Instructions

- Start with a key issue or problem that has been identified through other tools. The group draws the trunk of a tree, and labels this with the issue in question.
- Freethinking and discussion is used to determine the various different root causes of the problem and these are drawn as roots, and labeled. It may help to use sticky notes, since these can be moved around to distinguish between immediate causes. Keep asking “What causes that?” until the final root cause is identified.
- Next, the effects of the problem are drawn as branches of the tree. Once again, the diagram should identify links between issues by joining branches together. Find out what people know about each root cause and each symptomatic effect of the problem. Details and reasons may reveal further causes and effects. A useful digging question here is: ‘So what?’ As each new effect it identified it can be added to the branches.

Go Deeper

Using a new diagram, an activity can be assigned to the causes to show how they might be dealt with. The effects can be simply reworded into objectives that show how the situation could look as a result of the action.

Top Tips

Remember exploring questions and note taking! Use symbols if the participants are not confident in reading and writing.