



'Mi Parque' beneficiaries take part in a community workshop in Chile.

HANDBOOK 1

MODULE 3

Tools for Effective Project Planning in Community Development

Using a Problem and Objective Tree to Set Realistic Goals

This module aims to help you understand how setting realistic goals can improve your planning process. In development work, we often want to solve everything at once, but in practice there are often constraints upon time and resources that prevent us from achieving all that we desire. Using a Problem Tree that is then transformed into specific objectives enables you to set goals that are realistically achievable. Planning according to these specific and realistic goals will make your project more effective and cost-efficient, allowing you to do more with less.



Download Resources

As you complete this module, refer to '**Resource 6 - Problem Tree Analysis**', '**Resource 7 - Objective Tree Analysis**' and '**Resource 8 - Alternative Analysis**' which can be found as downloads alongside this module on our website. Use these resources as templates when planning your own project.

The importance of setting realistic goals

If you want to be successful, your goals must be within reach of what is possible. These achievable goals though, may still be part of a larger goal. Let's use the example of wanting to end hunger. Globally, your impact is going to be limited by a multitude of factors, like reach and access to necessary resources. Implementation is likely to be realistic only at a smaller scale. It does not mean that you should not strive to end hunger. What you should do is find ways in which your team can rectify hunger, poverty or food-shortage issues where you have reach. Once you've come up with an efficient and impactful design on a local level, you may be able to scale it up yourself and deploy it to other communities – or maybe it is an approach that other organisations can replicate and grow on their own. Both of these serve the ultimate goal and will bring several communities much-needed support.

In order to set your goals realistically and phrase your objectives specifically, it is essential to know what you are trying to do. For this, you have to know your problem, and the context you're operating in. Take a look at our 5-step situational analysis in **Module 2** to ensure you have an in-depth understanding of your context before you begin setting objectives.

Tools for setting goals and objectives

To get started in setting appropriate goals for your activities, there are a couple of different techniques that you may want to utilise. Ultimately, you want to set goals that are not only feasible, but also effective. Understanding; what resources you have, how projects have been conducted in the past and what you aim to achieve is a solid base for your development work. Here are some tools that are successfully used by project managers in business, as well as, development to help properly plan a project.



Helpful Hint

Make sure you use these tools in sequential order to make your goal setting is easy and thorough.

Key Goal Setting Tools

Problem Tree

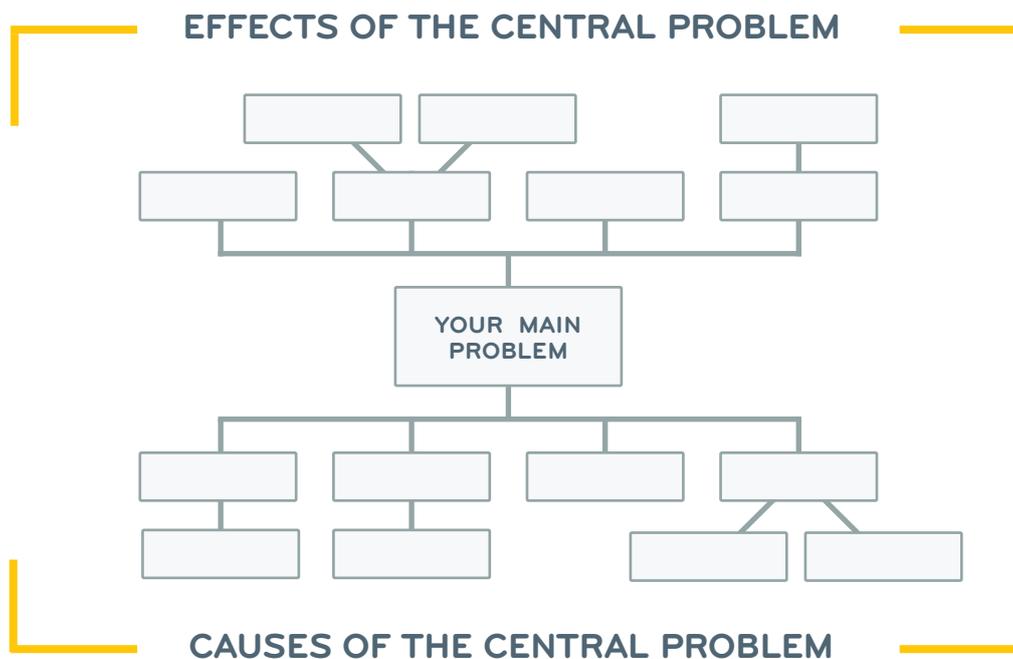
Objective Tree

Alternative Analysis

Defining
Clear Goals

Problem Tree Analysis

The purpose of the Problem Tree is to provide a broad overview of the problem, as well as, identify specific causes and resulting effects. The use of negative language whilst using this tool is helpful in identifying specific problems.



Step 1 Identify the main problem

- You will have identified the broad problem your organisation is seeking to address during your situational analysis in **Module 2**. Now is the time to start being a little bit more specific about your problem.
- The main problem will be placed at the centre of your problem tree.
- As we discussed in **Module 2**, deciding on the problem is best done in a group setting where community members and non-profit staff discuss core issues together.
- When trying to make your problem more specific, It can be useful to write suggested problems on a large piece of paper or blackboard so that everybody can see the options, identify how they interact and decide upon the most important problem to them as a group.
- Remember! It is important to identify a "problem"! Make sure that your problem is an existing negative state, not an absence of a solution. For example; "Crops are infested with pests" is a problem, "No pesticides are available" is not.



Download Resource

You can find a template for this tool in; '**Resource 6 - Problem Tree Analysis**' which can be found as a download alongside this module on our website. Use this resource as a guide when planning your own community development project.

Step 2 Identify the problem 'causes'

- Find the specific causes that are contributing to this problem.
- The specific causes contributing to the central problem are placed below the main problem, forming the 'roots' of your tree.
- Often, many of the problems your team identified in step 1 are contributing causes to your main problem and can be added at the bottom of the tree.
- Remember that there are often multiple layers to contributing causes. Try to dig deep. The more detail you go into at this stage, the easier it will be to identify objectives and solutions.
- It is useful to use post-it notes if available so that you can easily re-arrange your tree. This is particularly useful when grouping related causes together.

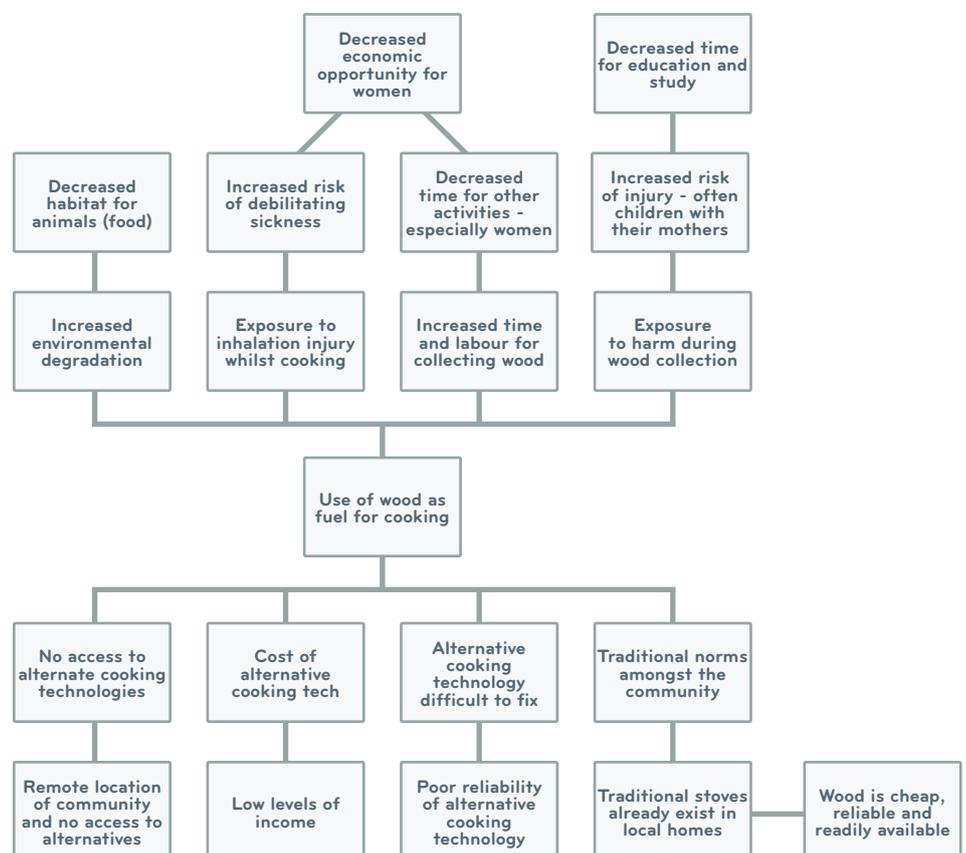
Step 3 Identify the problem 'effects'

- The final element of your problem tree are the effects resulting from your central problem
- These effects are placed above the problem and form the 'branches' of your tree
- Remember to explore multiple layers of each effect and be very specific

The problem tree is finished when all stakeholders are satisfied that all of the factors related to the main problem have been identified and placed on the tree.



**Example:
Problem Tree
exploring the use
of wooden fuel
for cooking in
India**



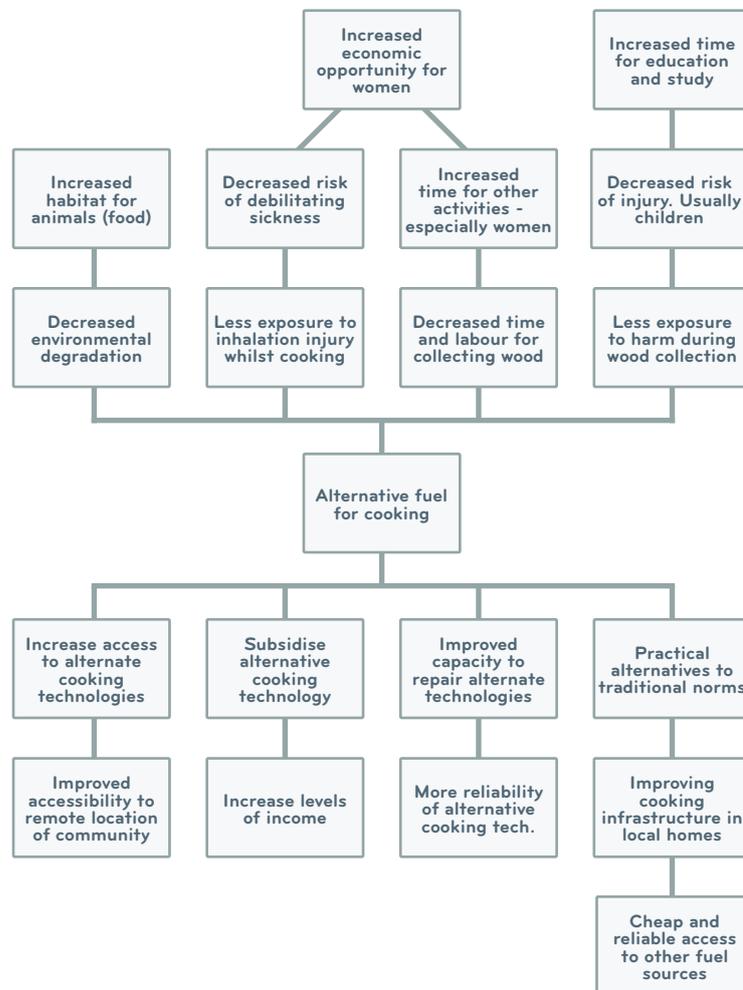
Objective Tree Analysis

The purpose of the objective tree is to identify specific objectives that will overcome each element of the problem tree. Objective trees are important in guiding your project design and measuring your success. When writing the statements on your problem tree, you used negative language, simply changing these to positive statements will help shape your objectives. For instance, "lack of resources," will become "increased resources."

- To transform your problem tree into an objective tree, simply rephrase each element into a positive solution statement.
- The more specific you can be, the more useful your tree will be.
- It's okay to add new objectives that come to mind. If you do so, consider going back and adding the associated problem to your problem tree, as well.



Example:
Objective Tree
exploring the use
of wooden fuel
for cooking in
India



Download Resource

You can find a template for this tool in; 'Resource 7 - Objective Tree Analysis' which can be found as a download alongside this module on our website. Use this resource as a guide when planning your own project.

Alternative Analysis

The final process is to identify related groups of objectives that can be linked to a specific type of development strategy. The goal here is to identify the broad types of strategies that are available for meeting your objectives and clarify which type of strategy will achieve each type of objective.

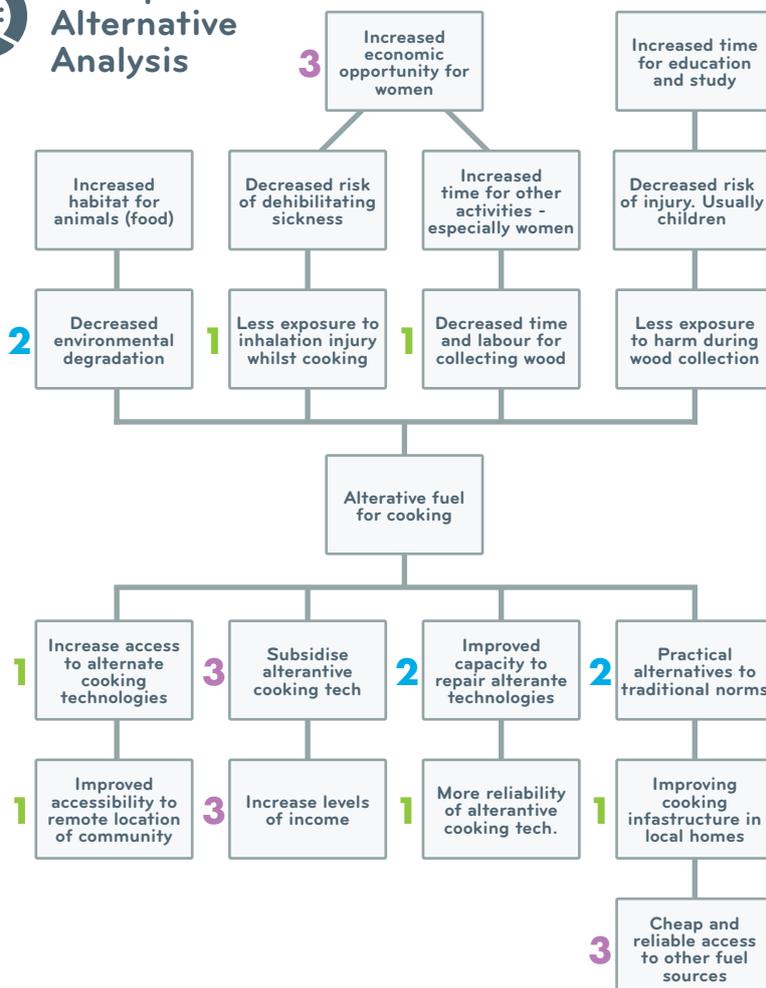
- Think about the broad types of solutions/strategies that could meet each of your specific objectives. Your objectives might be met by a healthcare strategy, infrastructure strategy, education strategy or many other types.
- Analyse your tree as a whole to see how your objectives can be categorised into groups in relation to the specific types of development strategies.
- These categories can often be seen most clearly at the bottom of the tree, so start from the roots and work your way up.

This exercise will reveal an array of alternative strategies that your organisation can use to solve the central problem, as well as meet each individual objective. Keep in mind that different strategies can, and in most cases should, be used together. The purpose of identifying broad categories of objectives is to understand the types of projects that might work and begin thinking about the resources, stakeholders and partners necessary for success.

In the example below you find that the objectives have been marked with three different numbers to represent the three alternative strategies that have been identified. Each number indicates which one of the strategies can be employed to meet the individual objective. In the boxes, the three strategies are named and briefly explained.



Example: Alternative Analysis



1. Infrastructure Strategy

- Focussing upon the provision of new cooking technologies

2. Education Strategy

- Educating community about the hazards of traditional methods and the benefits of newer technology

3. Economic Strategy

- Increase economic opportunity and subsidise new tech, stimulating purchase of new technology

SMART Goals

**Specific,
Measurable,
Achievable,
Relevant,
Timely****Discover the magic of SMART goals:**

Once you have identified your specific objectives, as well as the strategies available to meeting these objectives, it's time to start setting goals.

A renowned project management tool, known through the acronym SMART, is a valuable process to use when setting goals. The concept claims that goals can best be reached when they are:

Specific: clear, focused, concise and well-defined. The more specific you are, the greater the chance you have in achieving your goal.

- Example 1: Provide a new, sustainable, reliable, affordable and easily repairable source of cooking technology to the 26 families of (x) Indian community
- Example 2: Provide an education program outlining the health and environmental hazards of current cooking practice

Measurable: Timelines, dates, costs, beneficiaries, etc. Measuring your progress according to clearly defined parameters ensures you are staying on track and also keeps everyone motivated.

- Example 1: Begin community education program within 1 month of securing new cooking technology from supplier with (x) budget
 - Aim for 100% uptake in women and children engaged in current cooking practices
- Example 2: Provide technology within 3 months of securing new cooking technology
 - Aim for 90% uptake amongst community within 6 months

Achievable: You want to stretch your abilities and resources as far as possible, but you have to be realistic. Know what you are working with and what you can achieve with it.

- Example 1: Begin community education program within 1 month of securing new cooking technology
 - If you can achieve this goal highly depends on your team's experience and skills in community education programs and existing relationships with key community figures
- Example 2: Provide technology within 3 months of securing new cooking technology
 - if you can achieve this goal depends on your ability to either easily produce the cookers yourself or outsource the production of the technology

Relevant: Do your activities match your goal? Is your work going to make the impact you seek?

- Example 1: Provide an education program outlining the health and environmental hazards of current cooking practice
 - Combining the provision of new technologies with an education program that highlights the worth of the new cooking technology helps meeting the central goal of promoting more efficient cooking practices and improve the long-term health of local community members

Timely: When is it going to happen? Can this work be completed in the timeframe that you set? What is the optimal time to ensure relevance to beneficiaries?

- Example 1: Provide technology within 3 months of securing new cooking technology
 - By setting a specific timeframe, the need to partner with other nonprofit organisations or technology producers becomes apparent
 - It's important to give the timeframe some serious thought in order to ensure its' success

Finishing up

The SMART process gives you a framework to question your approach, challenge your perceptions and align your goals to be more effective.

When setting the goals for your project, use both your own experience, as well as the knowledge collected by other organisations to make sure your planning process is both SMART and informed. This will ensure that you achieve your goals and affect change in your community and beyond.

Now that you have a clear and concise goal for your project, **Module 4** will help you identify the people related to your project and to help develop strategies to engage these people in the right way through a Stakeholder Analysis.

This resource was produced by Grassroots Collective.

This is Module 3 of our 9-part handbook for project planning. Find the full handbook at: www.thegrassrootscollective.org/grassroots-hub

Have a question about project planning for community development or want to learn about how we can support your organisation on its mission? Contact us at: info@thegrassrootscollective.org

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