



PROBLEM DEFINITION

Preparation & Instructions



Description

The first stage in developing an effective and efficient response is defining the problem, as what may initially seem to be the problem may be a symptom of an underlying, and potentially larger, issue. The Problem Definition tool enables groups to comprehend what these potential underlying causes are and contextualise the problem to reframe it in a more focused and direct way. The Problem Definition can be used when in need for describing and elaborating on the underlying cause(s) of a targeted issue. To that extent, tool can be adapted to diverse kinds of interventions. With the help of the Problem Definition tool, it is possible to zoom in on a core issue that can be acted or improved upon after first gaining a comprehensive picture of the numerous complex and interconnected issues that influence it.

How to conduct

Duration: 30-45 min

Resources:

- Initial analysis and exploration of the context and its problems

Material: Pens, post-its

Participants per team: 3-15

Instructions:

1. The Problem Definition tool is a worksheet that should be filled from left to right, and it presents five consecutive columns, each one with a leading question, namely:
 - a) What is the issue?
 - b) Who is it a problem for?
 - c) What social/cultural factors shape this problem?
 - d) What evidence do you have that this is a significant problem?
 - e) Can you think of this problem in a different way? Can you reframe it?
2. Examine the Problem Definition template for a specific individual or organisation in small groups, taking notes on a large sheet of paper. You can repeat the process multiple times to expose new viewpoints. Compare your versions and then discuss whether you are making the same assumptions and presenting the same information. Attempt to reframe the problem then.



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Template

Based on the [Problem Definition Canvas in the SLearning Toolkit](#)

<p>ISSUE What is the issue?</p>	<p>AFFECTED GROUPS Who is it a problem for?</p>	<p>ENVIRONMENT What social/cultural factors shape this problem?</p>	<p>EVIDENCE What evidence do you have that this is a significant problem?</p>	<p>REFRAMING Can you think of the problem in a different way? Can you reframe it?</p>
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