

WASPA Guidance note 3: Stakeholder involvement through participatory action planning

Stef Smits and Joep Verhagen (2007) IRC
International Water and Sanitation Centre

Summary

This guidance note describes the phase of stakeholder involvement in Participatory Action Planning (PAP) for sanitation, wastewater management and agriculture with multiple stakeholders. It aims to give clarity on the expected output of this phase and guidance on the steps that need to be taken within this phase. This note consists of two parts: Part I gives the overview of the PAP: the objectives, stakeholders to be involved, the role of the facilitation team, flow of the PAP process and pitfalls to be avoided. Part II provides a detailed guidance of each of the phases of the process. Annex A describes the problem tree methodology.

Introduction

Why	<p>Participatory Action Planning is the phase in which we move from problem assessment towards planning for actions to improve situations.</p> <p>The goal of this phase is to come to consensus among the different stakeholder groups on a coherent set of strategies to address the problems of sanitation, wastewater management and reuse in agriculture in the pilot sites, according to the objectives or vision set by the stakeholders. These will be the basis for detailed plans, as well as the concrete activity around which the different clusters of stakeholders come together to form the learning alliance.</p>
Outputs	<p>The output of this phase in the planning cycle is a coherent set of strategies to address the problems of sanitation and wastewater, which is acceptable to the various stakeholder groups.</p>
Who is the note meant for?	<p>This note is meant for the local team leaders and field staff responsible for facilitating this phase. It might be necessary to translate (part of) this note into the local language.</p>
Link with other activities	<p>The PAP follows the participatory assessment phase, and involves the different groups of stakeholders identified in the stakeholder analysis. Having reached a set of strategies, these need to be developed into detailed plans for implementation.</p>

PART I: Overview of Participatory Action Planning (PAP)

What are we aiming for in the PAP?

The expected output of the Participatory Action Planning is a coherent set of strategies. This means a set of strategies that:

- address the objectives, or vision that the stakeholders agreed on to address issues of sanitation and wastewater management;
- are acceptable to the stakeholders; and
- are mutually consistent and do not contradict each other.

As stakeholders have different, sometimes, contradictory interests and objectives, getting to such a set will require negotiation and searching for consensus. Careful and methodological facilitation of the process is needed.

Stakeholders to be involved in PAP

In search of integrated approaches to wastewater management and sanitation, it is important that the PAP results in a set of strategies that is shared and owned by all stakeholders. Strategies which are mutually exclusive or contradictory will lead to problems in attempts to implement them. Similarly it is vital that there is consistency across strategies created with different time frames or spatial scales. For example, the strategy for the entire municipality will almost certainly be different from the strategies for only one ward within the municipality. Yet, they have to be consistent and compatible.

For these reasons, it is necessary to involve all the stakeholders, and the stakeholder clusters that have been identified in the stakeholder analysis phase. During the activities outlined below members of these clusters need to participate. Sometimes this can be with the cluster only, sometimes with all the clusters together.

At the same time, we must realise that the WASPA project tries to put the needs of the poorest in the community at the centre. The poorest are likely to be found among the farmers and those who live in the low-income housing areas. So, in the process we should facilitate in a way that supports them in putting their needs and ideas forward, and be careful that their necessities are put central in the PAP process. We need to keep in mind that the poorest find it also hardest to make their voices heard, so we need to take special precautions to ensure that the poor, and especially poor women, have an effective say in the planning process.

Flow of the PAP process

This section starts off with an introduction into the overall flow of the PAP, so we get the overview of the entire picture. The detailed steps to be followed, and the methods to be applied in each phases, will be explained in detail in part 2 of this note.

The overall PAP is structured along the logic of the planning cycle (see figure 1). The colour codes used for each phase will come back in the detailed diagram (figure 2) later in this note. **Note:** the implementation and monitoring and evaluation phases are not covered in detail this note.

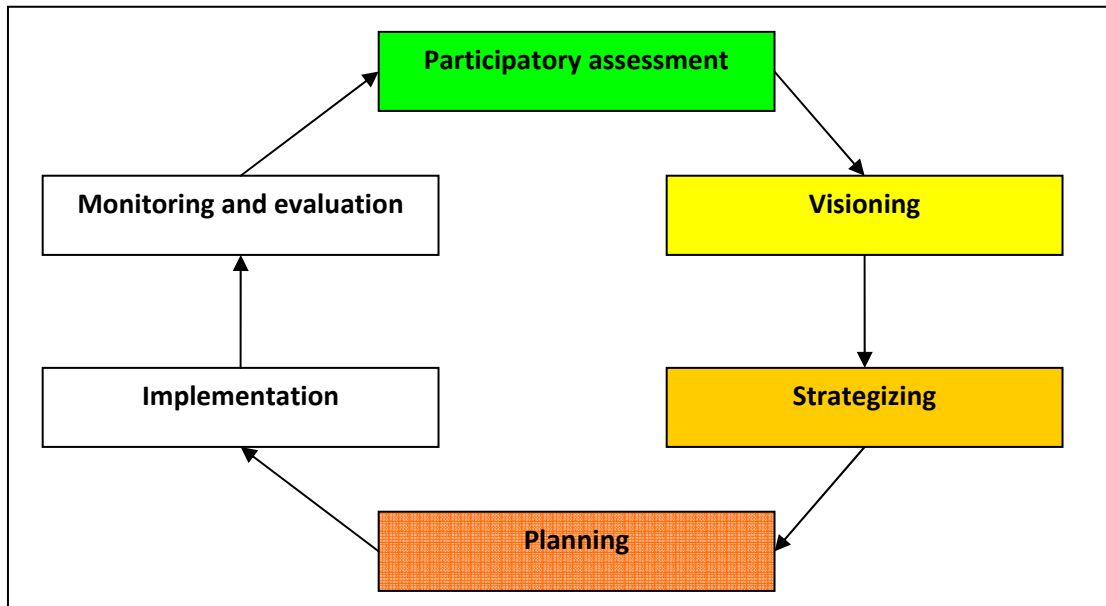


Figure 1: the planning cycle

In WASPA we will use the planning cycle as follows:

1. Assessment phase: A participatory assessment is done of the current situation in terms of sanitation, wastewater management and reuse of wastewater in agriculture. This leads to a joint problem analysis with the stakeholders and a prioritization of the key issues related to WASPA to be addressed. A differentiation is made between issues which can be solved on a short term, and on the longer term.
2. Visioning phase: In this phase, the stakeholders define the objectives (also called a vision) for a future desired stage, both for short and long term issues. With the stakeholders you check whether these visions are realistic.
3. Strategizing phase: The strategizing phase is the phase in which the stakeholders develop strategies that are needed to reach the objectives (again long term and short term) that have been defined. Proper attention is given to analysing whether the strategies form a coherent set and will lead to reaching the objectives.

4. Planning phase: In the planning phase, the strategies are turned into detailed plans, indicating methods to be used, costs, responsibilities, schedule of activities and agreed targets. A platform is set up to start monitoring the implementation of the plans.
5. Implementation phase: The plans that have been developed are implemented, according to the specifications of the plans.
6. Monitoring and evaluation phase: The implementation of plans, progress and challenges are monitored together with the stakeholders, and evaluation is carried out to see whether the plans enable reaching the defined objectives.

The facilitation team

As may be appreciated from the above, Participatory Action Planning is a process which involves various interactions with stakeholders. As with any stakeholder process, it will be difficult to keep stakeholders interested, to ensure that the voices of all are heard and that the process is well guided. Therefore, there is need for a skilled facilitation team for the entire process. It requires an experienced facilitator of participatory processes, who will oversee the entire process, and facilitate the various events (workshops, meetings, field visits, etc) that will take place within. In addition, the team may need to draw upon the different persons who have participated in the assessment phase to include their inputs, as they arise, and to check that objectives and strategies that are being developed are realistic and achievable.

Important notes and pitfalls to be avoided

Please note that the boundaries between the phases are not strict. You may be working on both visioning and strategizing in the same workshop, for example. Besides, often there are feed-back loops. For example, once the stakeholders have developed a strategy, you need to check whether it reaches the objectives set. It may appear that the objective in fact is not realistic, and you have to adjust the objective, while making sure that it is acceptable and shared by the stakeholders.

The WASPA project, most likely, will not have sufficient funds to finance all the plans that will be developed in both cities. The idea is to develop a coherent plan, which is not exclusively in the domain of the WASPA project. The stakeholders then have a coherent plan which can also be submitted (in parts) to other organisations. Other organisations, including the local authority, and maybe even the community members themselves, may be interested and able to finance other parts of the plan. It is important to indicate from the outset what the financial limitations of WASPA are. Likewise, it is important that other potential funders are part of this process. That makes it more likely that they are willing to fund elements of it.

The facilitation team is also responsible for documenting each of the phases and steps covered in the process, both on the methodology used, the discussions that were held and the outcomes. After each step, reflect with the team on the progress and prepare for the next one. In case new ideas or questions arise, please take this up with the entire WASPA group, so we can share thoughts on that.

A participatory planning process, by definition, requires the presence and time contribution of all the stakeholders. Not all stakeholders can afford to spend much time in workshops and meetings. It has been tried to reduce the number and duration of meetings as much as possible. Still this may be too much. We need to consider this and see whether it is necessary to define specific measures.

PART II: Detailed steps to be followed in PAP

This part of the note describes the phases shown above in much more detail in the form of steps, and provides the methodologies for each step. Figure 2 gives an overview of each of the steps. It uses the same colour codes as in figure 1. So, the steps in green correspond to the assessment phase, the steps in yellow correspond to the visioning phase, etc. You will note that the detailed steps for the implementation and monitoring phase are not there, as they are not dealt with in this note.

You also see that in this diagram, the flow splits between short term and long term issues. These will run in parallel. This allows us to tackle some short term issues which do not require the involvement of all stakeholders relatively quickly. We hope that this can satisfy the interest in some short term solution, while continuing to work on the more complicated long term needs.

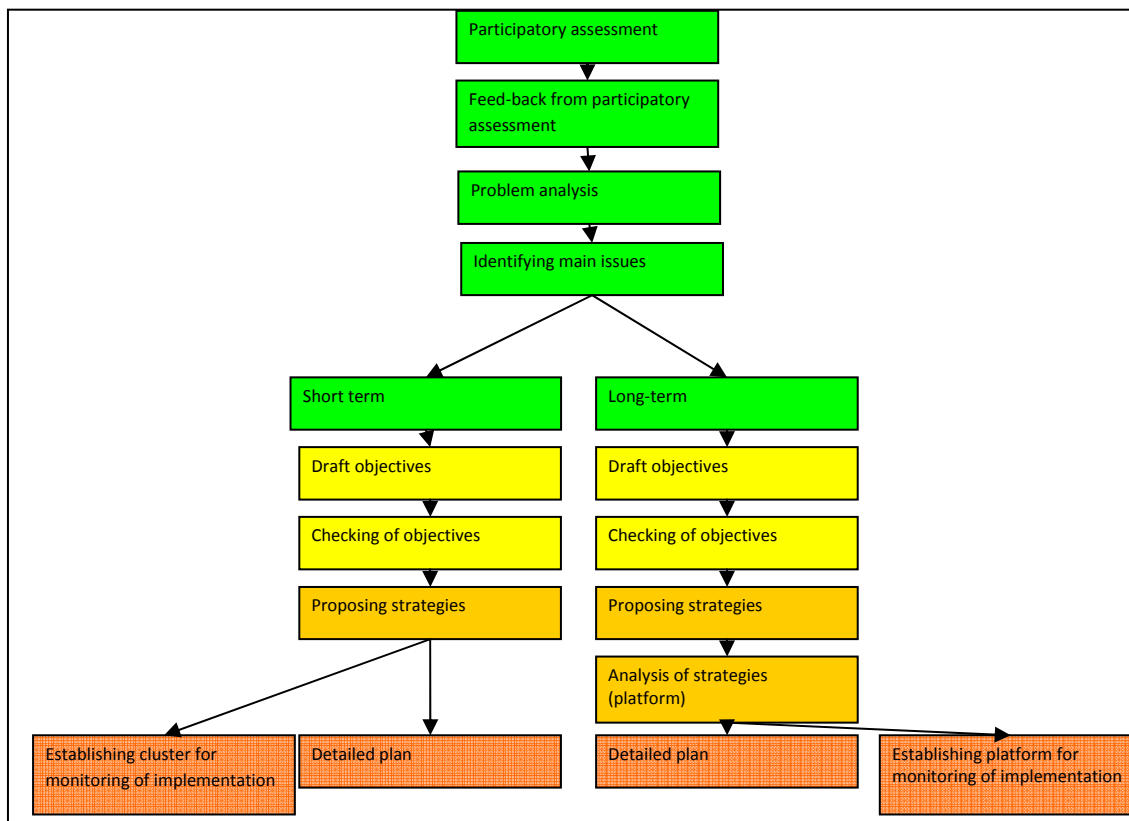


Figure 2: steps in Participatory Action Planning

The steps in Participatory Action Planning in further detail are:

Step 0: preparation

The entire PAP will take several months. It involves a range of meetings, workshops and field visits. Make sure that each of these is also carefully prepared, including issues such as inviting the correct stakeholders, preparing workshop materials, etc.

Step 1: Feed-back on the participatory assessment and problem analysis

The objective of this step is to reach a shared understanding of the current situation regarding sanitation, hygiene, and wastewater management and agricultural use. The methods of the assessments have been described in separate notes and hand-outs. This note therefore describes the next sub-step which is the feed-back from the participatory assessments.

We assume that the assessments of the different elements have been carried out in a participatory way, i.e. that the stakeholders have been able to use the exercises to analyse their own situation. However, not all stakeholders may have been able to participate in all activities. Therefore, a consolidated feed-back to the stakeholders is needed. This is needed in order to be able to develop common objectives and strategies. Some of the feed-back can happen within the stakeholder clusters, some require the participation of members from different clusters at the same time. This can happen, even before a formal platform has been established.

Step 1a: Joint transect walk.

The objective is to create a better understanding among stakeholders about their interdependency, being all based along the water courses, as well as about the interdependencies between sanitation, wastewater and agriculture. This activity requires participation of *representatives of all clusters*. The walk will be an upstream-downstream walk, where the entire group walks from the upstream areas where pollution originates, along the drains, all the way down to the agricultural lands. At different points of relevance along the walk, the facilitators stop to have short discussions on what is observed, especially focusing on the links between different elements of WASPA. As WASPA team, you are not only facilitating this exercise, but also act as resource persons. You need to add to the discussions by providing facts that were found, for example on water quality, access to sanitation, soils, etc.

Beware: this is not supposed to be a “name-and-shame” exercise, but create understanding about each other’s situation! Facilitate any discussions that arise accordingly.

Step 1b: bilateral workshops.

The objective of these workshops is to create a thorough understanding of the issues most directly affecting a certain cluster. These workshops will be held with each cluster individually. In these workshops not all problems related to sanitation and wastewater in the area will be discussed, only the ones most directly affecting the respective stakeholder cluster, but where relevant links will be made, also referring to the joint transect walk. The exact content and methodology of the workshops will therefore be different from one group to the other. Suggestions include:

- Farmers: focus group discussions on water quality and fertilizer management, farming practices that might make them at risk (hygiene practices).
- Residents: focus group discussion on access to and use of sanitation facilities; and on linkages between sanitation and hygiene.
- Local government: formal workshop in which findings on sanitation, pollution and reuse of wastewater are presented. Discussion on mechanisms and responsibilities in addressing these issues.

Please note that the steps 1c-1e should be dealt with in the same workshop, as they follow logically on step 1b. Going through step 1b-1e would probably require a full day.

Step 1c: problem analysis.

The objective of this step is to consolidate the problem analysis with each cluster, in such a way that the main issues can be distilled (see step 1d). It is recommended to do this in the same workshop as the exercise 1b, so that focus group discussions are consolidated. A useful way of doing this, is by developing a problem tree together with the stakeholder cluster (see [Annex A](#) for a detailed description of how to carry out problem tree analyses) which brings together the various sub-components of WASPA. Such an exercise will need to be complemented by feedback by the project team, to take away misunderstandings, myths, to add information found during the assessment, etc.

Please note: You need to be aware that for some of the stakeholders problems related to sanitation or use of waste water might not be on the top of their priority list. Even though through previous meetings it has become clearer what the scope of our work, if needed, due care should be given to gently get people to concentrate at the issue at stake.

It is important to avoid making any commitments or raise expectations of the stakeholders. Unfulfilled commitments will make future collaboration with these communities very difficult.

Step 1d: prioritizing main issues.

The objective of this exercise is to identify and select those issues which are priority for the stakeholder cluster. Having separated root causes and effects, check with the participants, which of these are the main issues for them, and prioritize these. These issues can be identified and grouped on the basis of the exercise done in Step 1c. In case a problem tree analysis has been done, the main issues are normally found in the top of the tree (the branches of effects). Prioritizing can be done, using pocket voting, in which participants indicate their own preference for issues to be addressed. Ensure that all voices, especially of the most vulnerable are heard in this exercise. You may, for example, temporarily break in separate sub-groups of men and women to do this exercise and then come back in plenary to discuss.

Step 1e: identifying “quick wins” and long term issues.

The objective of this last step in the problem analysis is to identify which of these issues can be taken forward by the cluster itself, and which one require the involvement of other stakeholders. The former can easily be turned into “quick wins” to keep the interest of the cluster while going ahead with long term issues via another track. But ensure that no commitments are made that cannot be fulfilled.

The exercise consists of checking for each of the main issues whether other stakeholders are to be involved or not. This is done by asking the following questions for each of the prioritized issues:

1. Would other stakeholder need to be involved to address the identified issue, for example by implementing actions, paying for them, or maintaining them? If yes, whom?
2. Would it cause any effects on other stakeholders to address the identified issue? If yes, to whom?

The results will be categorised as follows:

- Those issues which do not require any other stakeholder to be involved will be taken forward as quick wins with the cluster itself.
- For those issues which require other stakeholders (especially if the other stakeholders are an authority), a discussion needs to be held whether it can be dealt with bilaterally with the other stakeholder, and also considered a quick win. A good example of such an issue is the garbage trap in Sri Lanka.
- Among all other issues, the members are asked to make a prioritization of the three most important ones. These will be brought to the platform, and are considered long-term issues.

For each of the identified categories (quick wins, bilateral and long-term), define:

1. whom will be involved in the next steps
2. when will this be done
3. how monitoring and feed-back to the cluster will be arranged

Step 2: Setting objectives/ visioning

Please note that in the Power Point discussed during the last meeting in Sri Lanka, we talked about visioning. After discussion, we proposed to call it objectives instead, as that term is probably more familiar. Use whichever term most suitable in the local context. Please note that an objective is *not* a solution; it is a desired state.

This step aims to turn problems or issues into a coherent set of objectives. The steps to be followed are the same for the quick wins and the long-term issues. The main difference is that for the quick wins, Step 2, Step 3 and part of Step 4 can probably all be done within one meeting, whereas for the long term issues various events may be needed.

The facilitation team is responsible for documenting the outcomes, as well as the discussions that were held, including alternatives that were discarded. They may come in useful at a later stage when alternatives need to be formulated again.

Step 2a: drafting objectives.

For each of the identified issues, define what the objective could be. An objective should describe a desired state, *not* an action. Often, it is useful to go back to the problem tree and re-phrase problems as objectives. This will allow you to be as specific as possible. Do this for each of the issues identified until you have a set of objectives. Examples of objectives could be:

- To have an irrigation canal, free of solid waste, for most of the year
- For all households in the area to have access to sanitation which acceptable to the users and reduces impacts of waste on the environment

Step 2b: checking objectives.

This step is needed to check whether the objectives are consistent, compatible and realistic. This can be done by answering the following questions:

- Would achieving one of the objectives, result in another one not being achievable, in terms of contradicting another objective of the same cluster? For example, if the objective of the slum dwellers it to get access to flushed toilets, while another objective is to reduce their impact on the canal, these obviously contradict each other.
- Is each of the objectives formulated “SMART” (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound).
- For the short-term issues only: now that you have formulated the objective, does it still not require involving other stakeholders? Otherwise, it may still need to be taken to the full platform.

If any of these questions is answered negatively, go back to step 2a, and adjust it accordingly until the objectives are consistent, compatible and realistic.

Step 3: Strategizing

This step aims to turn objectives into a coherent set of strategies.

A strategy is a framework within which concrete activities are identified. It is different from a detailed plan, which includes an explicit statement of the methods to be used, costs, responsibilities, schedule of activities and agreed targets, and will be developed in step 4.

For quick wins, this step can be taken together with step 2 and step 4 in the same workshop. For long term issues, step 3a and step 3b will be done with the cluster only, in the same event as step 2. Step 3c will need to be done in a separate event with all cluster representatives together.

The facilitation team is responsible for documenting the outcomes of this entire step, as well as the discussions that were held, including alternatives that were discarded. They may come in useful at a later stage when alternatives need to be formulated again.

Step 3a: developing strategies.

The objective of this sub-step is to get a coherent set of strategies to reach each of the objectives. This is done in an open discussion with the cluster members, either in plenary or in sub-groups. Ask for each of the objectives the different actions which could be employed to reach it. Many objectives will require several actions, some of which are alternatives to each other. For example, if the objective is “to have water quality complying with standards in the agricultural areas”, strategies may either be “reducing pollution flows into the canal”, or “treating all the pollution before it flows into the agricultural area”. These are obviously two different types of strategies, which result in different actions. Try to write these out in as much detail as possible.

Step 3b: checking strategies internally.

Check whether the strategies are consistent, compatible and realistic. The following questions need to be answered:

- Would implementing one of the strategies, result in another one not being achievable?
- Is each of the objectives formulated “SMART” (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound).
- For the short-term issues only: now that you have formulated the objective, does it still not require involving other stakeholders? Otherwise, it may still need to be taken to the full platform.

Having answered these questions, the participants may need to discard strategies which are not consistent or re-formulate them. This may also help in selecting the most realistic of strategies in case various alternatives are possible. For the quick wins, you can now proceed to step 3d, and develop agreements for the way forward. For the long term issues, you now need to take the strategies to a meeting with all clusters (step 3c).

Step 3c: selecting strategies with all stakeholders.

The objective of this step is to select those strategies which will become common to all the stakeholders. By this time, a formal cluster may not yet have been established. This step will therefore be carried out in a separate workshop from the previous one. Participants will need to be invited and clearly briefed about the objectives of the workshop and the need to come together. By the end of the workshop, the platform can be further formalised. After the introduction to the workshop, the following exercises need to be done:

- Each of the clusters presents the objectives and proposed strategies it has developed (on Flip charts) After each presentation there is time for questions for clarification, not for discussion.
- Checking whether objectives are compatible. All objectives will be put next to each other, and participants will discuss the question: would achieving one of the objectives result in another one not being achievable?
- If there are incompatibilities, these are parked for the moment. The ones which are consistent then become also the platform's objectives.
- Checking strategies. A matrix is developed to check what the different strategies would imply for different stakeholders, and whether they help achieving the objectives.

The following matrix is proposed:

	Implications for stakeholder 1	Implications for stakeholder 2	Does it allow reaching the objectives
Strategy 1			
Strategy 2			
Strategy 3			
Strategy ...			

- Based on that analysis, probably there will be a number of strategies which are not very contentious and allow some of the objectives to be reached. These can then be taken further and turned into detailed plans (see step 4)
- There are likely to be objectives and strategies around which no agreement can be reached. These will form the agenda for further negotiation. The purpose of this workshop is not to start negotiations.

The output of this step consists of:

- A number of shared objectives of the platform
- A number of strategies which can immediately be turned into detailed plans
- A number of objectives and strategies which require further negotiation

Step 3d: agreements for way forward.

In defining the way forward, three areas need to be covered:

1. Establishing a platform which will take the strategies forward. This platform will be tasked to turn the strategies into detailed plans, and later oversee the implementation of the plans.
2. Governance and operational modalities of the platform need to be defined.
3. Agreement on further negotiation of the outstanding issues. Depending on how large and complicated this agenda is, in comparison to the immediate strategies, the group may choose to postpone further negotiation until much later, and first start to learn together around the first set of strategies.

Step 4: detailed planning

In this phase, the strategies will be made operational into a detailed plan, which includes an explicit statement of the methods to be used, costs, responsibilities, schedule of activities and agreed targets.

References

Patrick Moriarty, Charles Batchelor, Firas T. Abd-Alhadi, Peter Laban, and Hazem Fahmy (2007) The EMPOWERS Approach to Water Governance: Guidelines, Methods and Tools.

<http://www.empowers.info>

Annex A. : Problem tree analysis

This tool has been taken from EMPOWERS (2007)

Objectives of Problem Tree analysis

1. To identify the main water related problems affecting stakeholders; their causes and effects
2. To begin the process among stakeholders of analysing and understanding their water resources and services
3. To begin to identify the main needs for information collection

Introduction

Problem trees are one of the main tools of the ‘logical framework’ approach to planning, and therefore a core element of planning cycle based approaches. The aim of using problem trees is to help stakeholders move beyond the statement of their ‘problems’ – which in practice are typically actually symptoms or effects – and to identify the fundamental causes of these problems, and the most important effects that they generate.

The main output of a problem tree design exercise is therefore a cause and effect diagram which creates a logical hierarchy of causes and effects and the links between them.

Creating good problem trees calls for the support of a skilled facilitator, as well as plenty of time. If the tree is to serve the purpose of starting the process of a commonly analysed and owned understanding of water related issues it is crucial that there is good representation of stakeholders during problem tree design sessions – as there may be considerable difference of opinion between different stakeholders

The problem trees developed should not exist as a single snapshot, but should be returned to and revised at least throughout the first three steps of the planning cycle.

Materials needed

- Flip chart paper
- Markers
- Scotch tape (or pins) for displaying charts
- Cards
- String
- A large sheet

Method

1. Depending on group size, either in one or several groups brainstorm all water related problems in the domain and put each on a card (one point per card)
2. Identify one (or a few) shared core problems, and write precise definitions of these on a card.
3. Divide the other cards into causes and effects of the core problems; and stick them respectively below and above the core problem on a large sheet.
4. Use string to link each card to all those cards that are a direct cause for it, and to all cards that it in turn affects. There can be multiple different causes for each effect and effects for each cause. Some

cards (such as poverty) may be both fundamental causes AND principal effects – in this case use two cards for the same issue.

5. For each card, looking at the other cards that may be causal for it, ask the question ‘are these cards sufficient to explain why this occurs’. If the answer is no, then write new cards until all causes are identified.
6. Create horizontal groups of cards that cause, or are the effects of another card. Where cards are very similar create a single new card to represent them all.
7. Review the logic, and alter the links until all in the group are satisfied with the result
8. Either photograph the final problem tree, or copy it carefully onto a sheet of flip-chart paper.
9. Create a copy of the final problem tree and share it with stakeholders.

Tips and tricks

- Take the time to make sure that there is clear agreement as to the meaning of each card, and its relations with others. Make sure this meaning is documented for example by writing on the back of the card. If possible put problems of similar relative importance on one horizontal row.
- A good problem tree session is very dependent on skilled facilitation. Facilitators should be familiar with the problem tree approach, and also with water related issues. Where necessary the facilitator can support the stakeholders in making links between cause and effects based on their own knowledge.
- As with other tools and outputs, the problem tree exercise is as important for its role in generating dialogue and shared understanding between stakeholders as it is in creating a written output. Therefore sufficient time must be given to allow for a good exercise and for the inevitable discussions, arguments and tangential interventions that will arise.

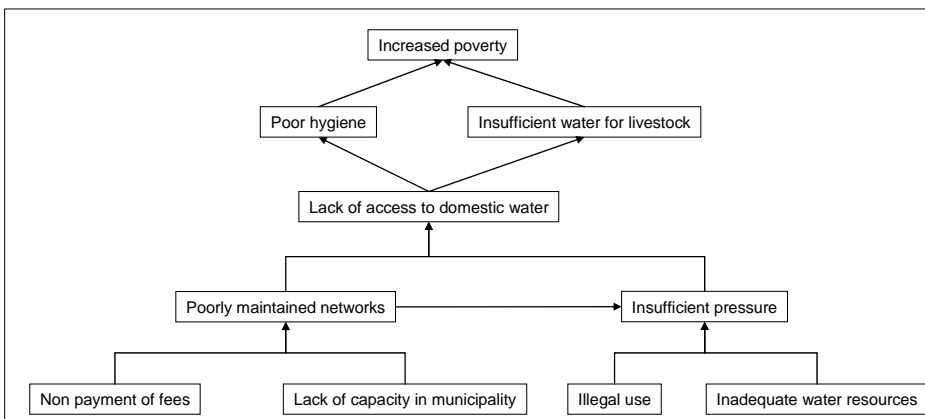


Figure 1: example of a problem tree

Further resources

Moriarty, Patrick; Batchelor, Charles; Abd-Alhadi, Firas T.; Laban, Peter; Fahmy, Hazem (2007) *The EMPOWERS Approach to Water Governance: Guidelines, Methods and Tools*

IAC / Wageningen UR “Participatory Planning Monitoring and Evaluation Resource Portal”

http://portals.wdi.wur.nl/ppme/?Problem_tree