

Overview: Problem Analysis Framework

The problem analysis framework explained in this document is an extended version of the problem analysis section in the Swedish Partnership Programme Guide for Partners. This framework is open to all partners and is not in any way compulsory to adopt.

This resource has been purposefully designed to serve as a support to partners in identifying root causes and ways in which a problem can affect a diverse group of rights holders in different ways, in addition to identifying key actors to engage.

The exercises in this framework can support partners in conducting, deepening, or clarifying a problem analysis, meaning that it can also be useful for partners who have already developed a problem analysis but would like to look closer at the analytic foundation of their work. A stronger problem analysis contributes to more relevant and effective initiatives, and it informs important elements of an operational plan, such as the goal(s), relevant actors to engage, and the approach or method for how to achieve the goals.

It is up to each user to determine which exercise(s) to use and how to apply or sequence these. For some, the root cause analysis may be the most relevant, whilst for others the analysis of effects might be more relevant – all depending on preconditions and existing knowledge, and previously conducted analyses. One does not need to already have defined a very specific problem before conducting the exercises – it is sufficient to have identified a broadly described problem “area”. The reason for this is that a deeper analyses of the root causes and effects of a problem will help with identifying and selecting a more specific issue to concentrate on. It is recommended to focus on one problem at a time when going through these exercises, to avoid getting lost in a high volume of information.

It is important that these analytical exercises are done in a collective manner and that those conducting them have a deep understanding of the relevant context and actors and can communicate the diversity of experiences and preconditions that exists among the rights holders. This framework is divided into two sections. The first section describes an exercise for

(1) identifying the effects of a problem, (2) the ways in which a problem can affect rights holders in different ways, and (3) identifying key actors to engage. The second section provides an exercise for identifying the root causes of a problem and digging deeper into each root cause. An example analysis is provided (as an annex) to add clarity to the steps.

The content of this framework is inspired by the Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation Approach (PDIA)¹.

¹ Andrews, M., Pritchett, L., Samji, S., & Woolcock, M. (2015). Building capability by delivering results: Putting Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA) principles into practice. *A Governance Practitioner's Notebook*, 123.

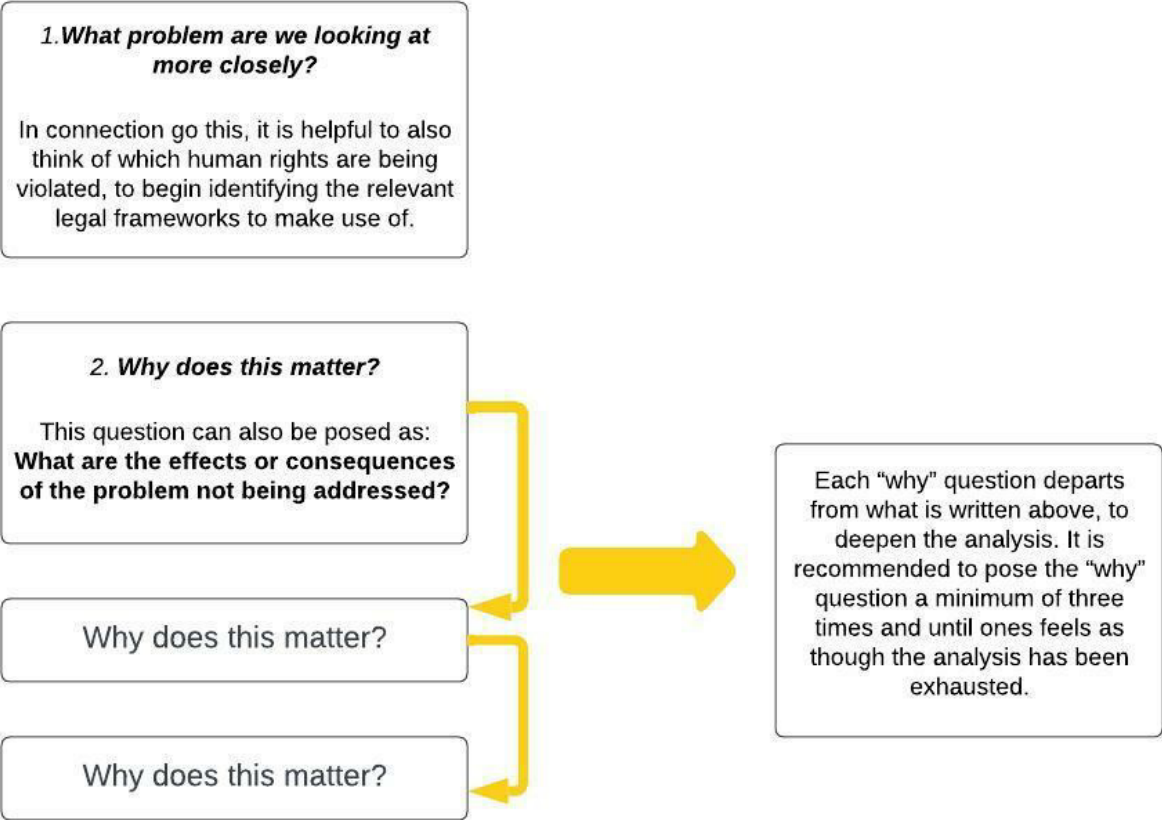
Problem Analysis: Causes and Effects

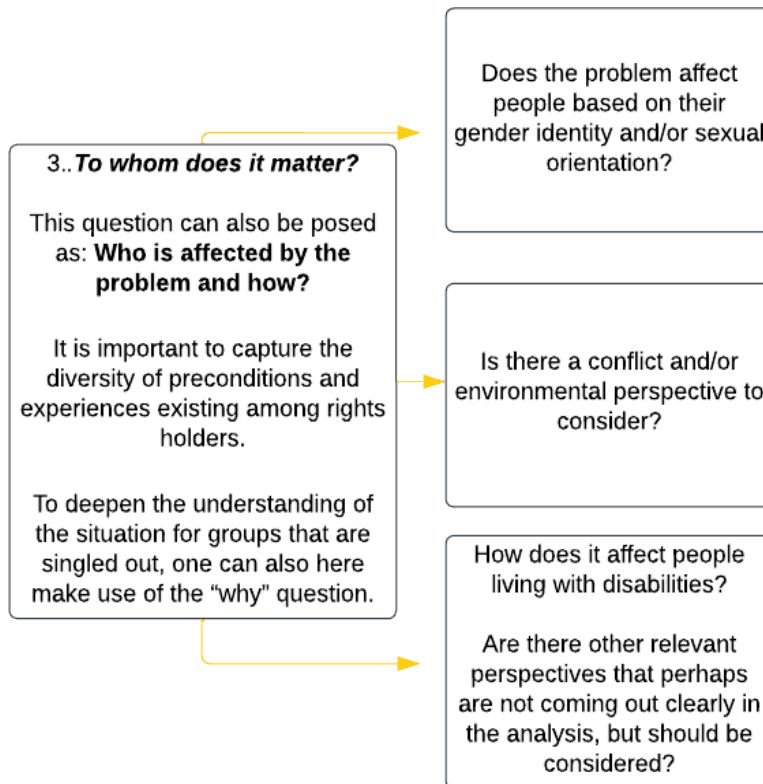
It is not uncommon that an expressed problem is a symptom or effect of a deeper issue. Inadvertently focusing only on the effect of a problem can result in an analysis and a set of actions that are unlikely to achieve long term or structural changes. Similarly, focusing only on the root causes of a problem, without considering the effects of the problem and how these vary depending on a people's preconditions, might result in actions that do not adequately address the situation that rights holders experience in present day. Separating causes from effects and working on these two fronts is challenging but it is important to try do so to contribute to lasting and meaningful change. Often, several root causes together contribute to a problem, which can have far reaching effects and affect people differently and unequally depending on their preconditions.



Part I: Identifying the Effects of a Problem and its Related Actors

To identify the effects of a problem, we have outlined a few helpful guiding questions:



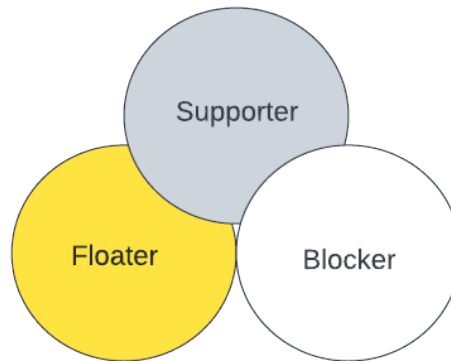


It is crucial to create safe spaces for rights holders to share their experiences – especially when discussing a sensitive topic and/or including individuals who experience discrimination or persecution.

4. Which actors can be considered supporters?

This question can also be posed as:
Who stands behind this cause and/or is already acting to address this problem?

Identifying these actors will help inform what results or actions to build on and/or who to collaborate with, for a greater effect.



5. Who needs to care more?

This question can also be posed as:
Which actors with influence or power need to become positively engaged for change to happen?

If an actor is not clearly in support of a cause, they may be perceived as being either against change (blocker) or an actor with an unclear position (floater) – or somewhere in between.

Some find it helpful to have a visual representation of this kind of categorisation of actors. The point of this exercise is not to strictly categorise actors, but to acknowledge the need for tailored approaches.

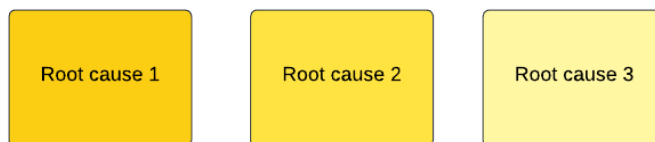
Part II: Identifying and Looking Closer into Root Causes

A simple way to identify and dive deeper into the root causes of a problem is to repeatedly pose the question “why”; in other words: **Why is this problem existing?**

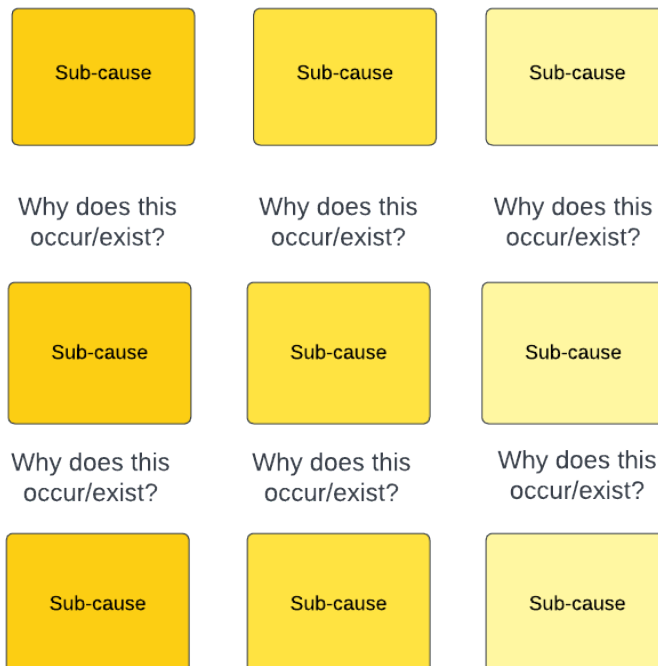
Why does X
problem
occur/exist?



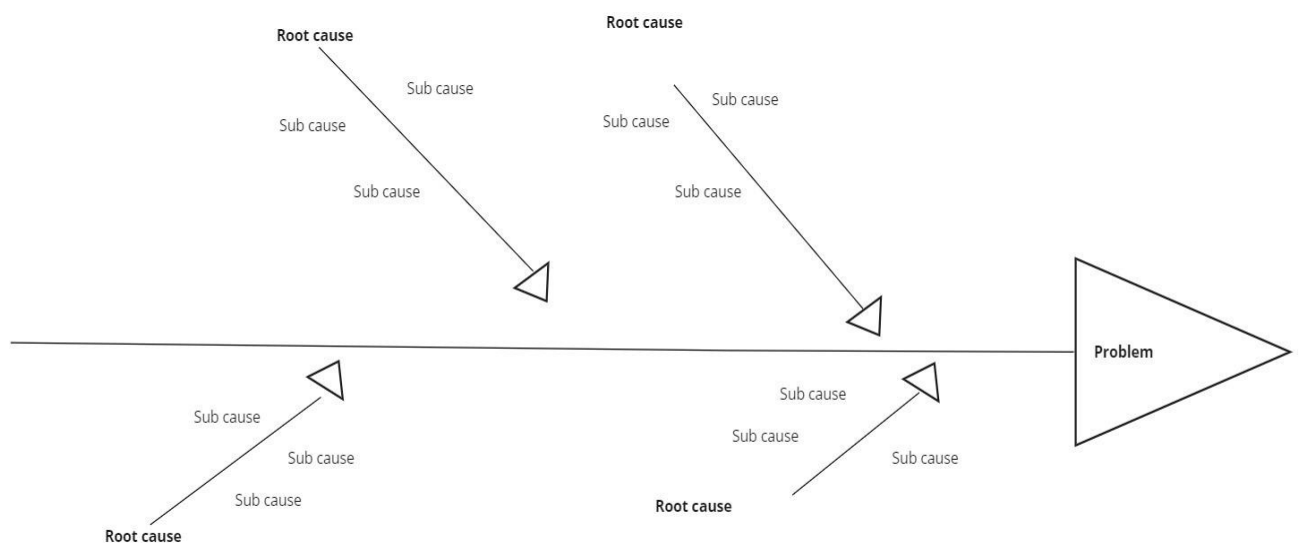
As is illustrated below, each "why" question builds on each other, similarly to the exercise outlined in part one of this resource.



Each root cause can be broken down further by repeating the "why" question. It is recommended to focus on one root cause at a time and to pose the "why" question a minimum of three times or until one feels as though the analysis has been exhausted.



Visualisation: Some find it useful to visually map the information derived from the above exercise; one example is the Fishbone illustration. Such an illustration can serve as a support when discussing where one wishes to focus efforts and for easily revisiting the analysis at a later stage. It also allows for a visual “grouping” of factors, for instance around lack of resources, laws and policies, societal norms, and more.



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Concluding word

Although the exercises are structured in a sequenced way, the problem analysis is not a linear process. There are different ways to go about engaging in these exercises and the various analyses reinforce each other. The usefulness of this tool can be extensive, depending on existing needs, and as has been stated earlier, it is completely up to the user to decide which parts of the framework to use, how, and when.

These exercises highlight the complexities of each individual problem that one seeks to change - and its context. To avoid getting lost in the high volume of information and existing issues, one must naturally choose where to focus efforts. Such a prioritisation should, among other factors, consider existing preconditions and means to achieve change.

There exists several tools to help with the process of prioritisation - many of which consider factors such as: if one has the authority, acceptability, and ability to implement what one plans to do; this could also help test one's own assumptions of the factors that may affect the project and sequence actions (meaning, what actions can be done with ease immediately and what could wait or requires long term planning).

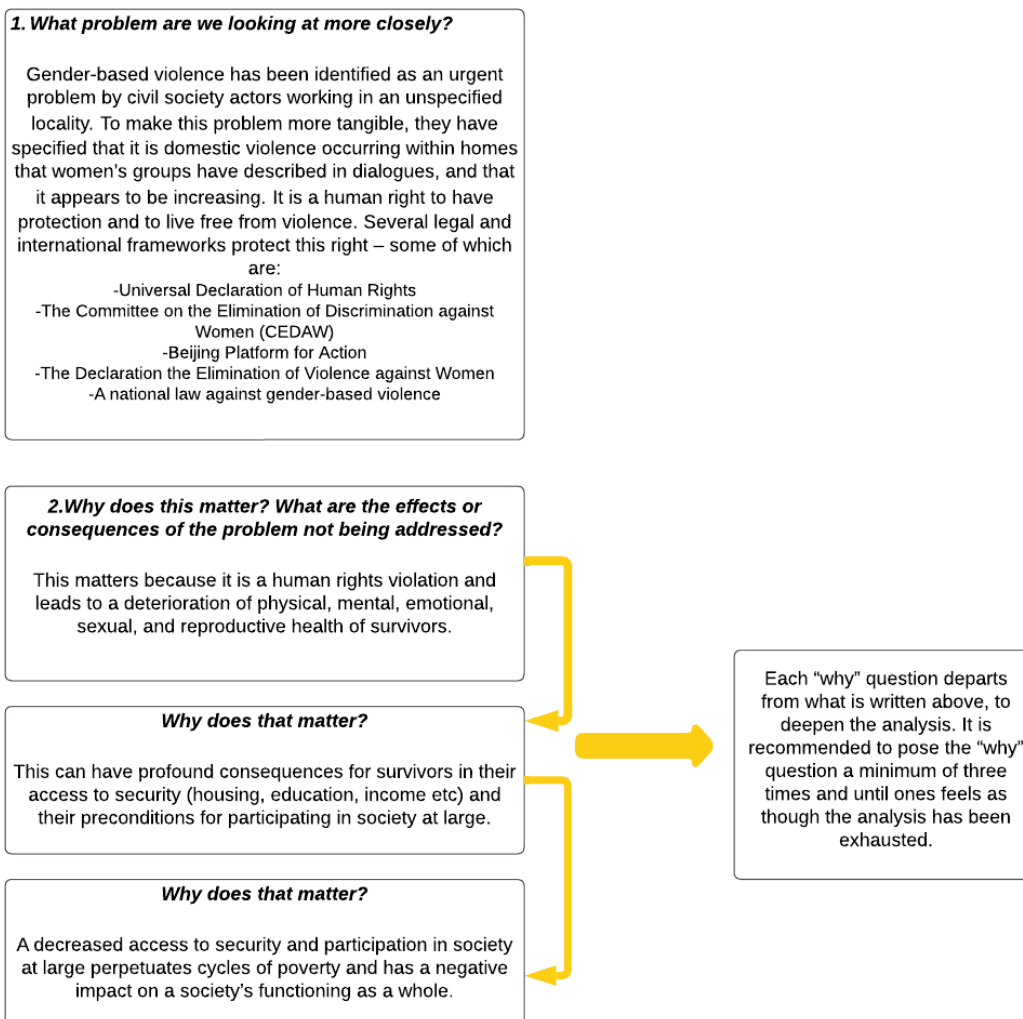
Below are examples of how one could choose to use the information derived from these problem analysis exercises, but this is by no means an exhaustive list:

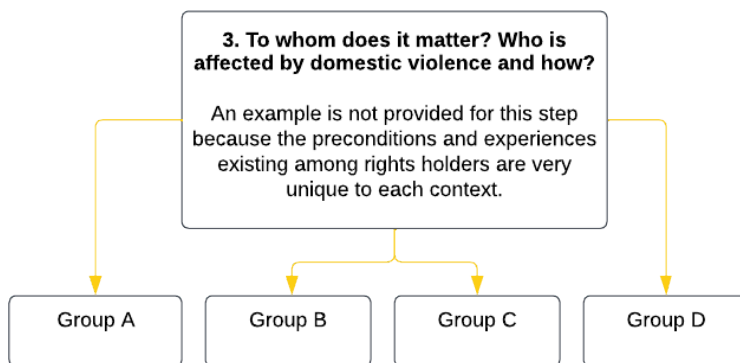
- ✓ To deepen an existing problem analysis
- ✓ To motivate the importance of working with a certain issue, when for instance engaging actors and/or applying for funds to a donor
- ✓ To strengthen the understanding of a context
- ✓ To begin making a new problem analysis, serving as a basis for an operational plan
- ✓ To revise the analytical foundation of an operational plan

Annex

An Example of a Summarised Problem Analysis, using the Case of Domestic Violence

Part I: Identifying the Effects of a Problem and its Related Actors





**4. Which actors can be considered supporters?
Who stands behind this cause and/or is already acting to address this problem?**

In this example case, there are informal groupings of domestic violence survivors who support each other, but who have not raised this problem at a community level.

There are no civil society organisations working specifically on domestic violence in this locality, but there is one local civil society network composed of organisations working for gender equality. On a national level, there are a handful of civil society actors working directly with ending domestic violence; they have collaborated in the past on a national campaign.

Another key supporter is the municipal Chief of Police. The Chief of Police is a formal duty bearer, as they are representatives of the government's law enforcement agency. They have the responsibility and power to respond to, detect, and prevent crime. This actor can be considered a supporter because domestic abuse is illegal in this country, and it is their conviction that domestic abuse is serious and needs to be eradicated.

However, the police department is underfunded and has limited resources to fully fulfil its mandate. The police have a working relationship with the social services, but the collaboration is not very developed.

This municipality also has a Department of Women that provides guidance to individuals who seek support. The department was recently set-up and has a few individuals working there, with limited funds.

There also exists a small working group within the Ministry of Family Affairs that focuses on combatting domestic abuse. The Ministry of Family Affairs is planning to invite civil society actors for a national dialogue on this subject.

A dialogue is needed to identify ways in which the civil society, police department, municipal women's department, social services, and the ministry can collaborate to achieve change.

The example analysis could be developed to gain an even broader view of supporting actors and deepen the understanding of the already identified supporting actors, their work so far, and potential synergies.

5. Who needs to care more?

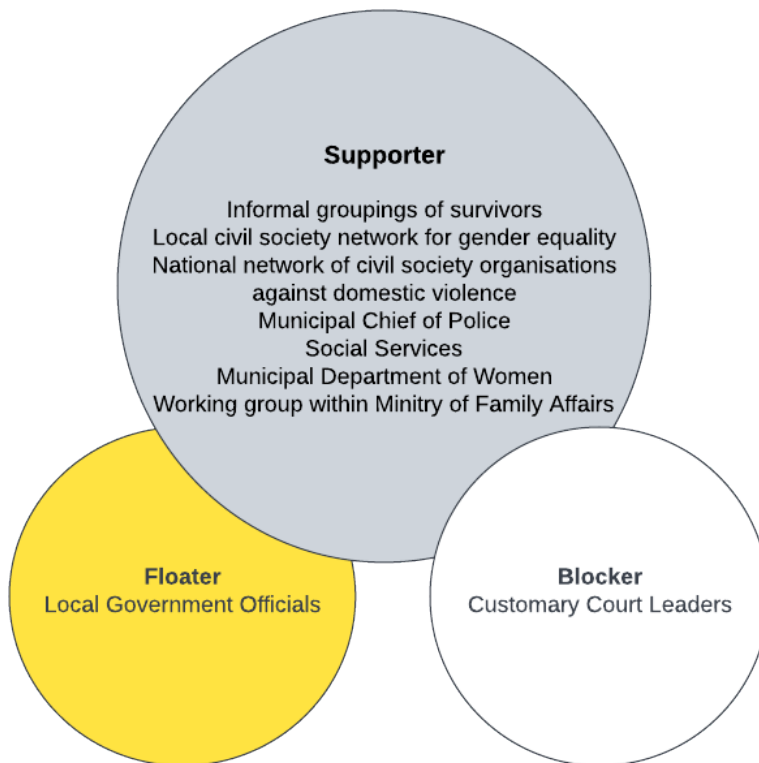
Which actors with influence or power need to become positively engaged for change to happen?

The customary courts hinder the normal functioning of the formal justice system and they do not adequately uphold the national laws and international conventions addressing domestic violence, which is detrimental to rights holders. For this reason, the customary court leaders can be perceived as being "blockers".

In other areas, unrelated to domestic violence, local government officials have played an important part in achieving change. However, it is unclear what approach they have to domestic violence, as they have not publicly addressed this subject. For this reason, the local government officials can be perceived as being "floaters".

A dialogue is needed to better understand the pre-conditions and interests of the customary court leaders and the local government officials, to develop approaches for how to engage these important actors.

The example analysis could be developed to gain an even broader view of actors with power and influence over the problem, and deepen the understanding of their preconditions, interests, and potential impact.



Part II: Identifying and Looking Closer into Root Causes



The example analysis could be developed further to gain an even deeper understanding of the root causes of domestic violence.

