

Creating a Problem Statement & Problem Hypothesis

Part 1: Problem Statement

Your needs assessment will help your organization decide what the “problem” is that your program is going to tackle.

To create your problem statement, try answering the following questions about the problem you aim to address:

- Who is affected?
- Where does the problem take place?
- What is the magnitude of the problem?
- What evidence exists?
- When does the problem occur? Are there trends?
- Why is this a problem? Why should the organization/funders/communities be concerned? (SO WHAT?)
- Why is this happening? What is the cause of this problem?



→ Be as specific as possible, but aim for less than 4 sentences!



EXAMPLE Problem Statement:

According to the UN, Gender-based violence (GBV) affects one in three women worldwide at some point in their lifetime. Root causes include systematic patriarchy, rigid gender norms, and toxic masculinity. Not only does GBV violate the basic human rights of women worldwide, it results in lower academic achievement, lack of autonomy, isolation, poor health outcomes, and death.

Part 2: Problem Hypothesis

Armed with your problem statement,, do some best-practice research to come up with the program activities and structure.

Next you will write out the logical steps between the problem and the impact you expect to see in the community.

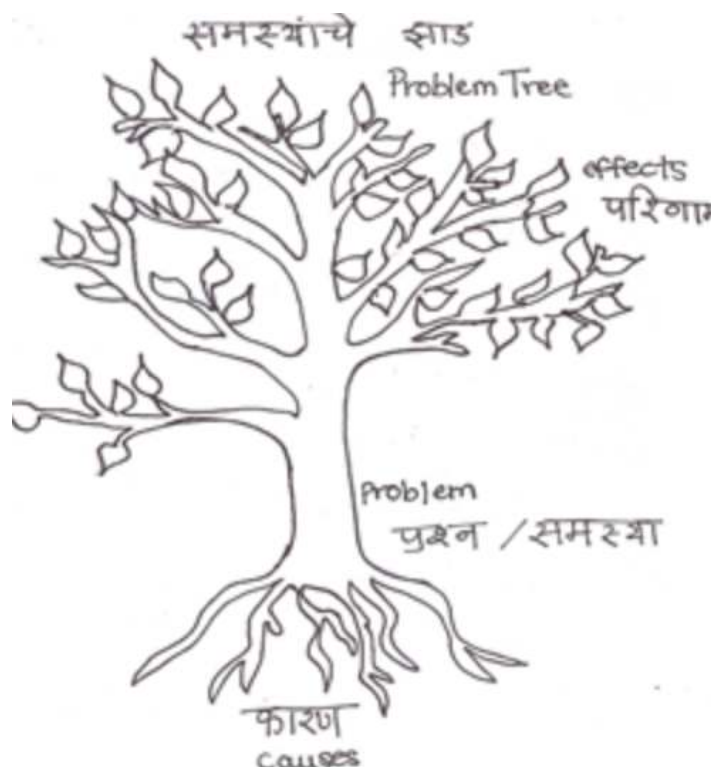
→ This is called the **problem hypothesis**. A problem hypothesis helps you describe the community need you are addressing, how you are aiming to address this need, and what you expect to see as a result of your program.



Step 1: Answer the Question - Why does this problem exist?

ACTIVITY:

One activity that may help you answer this question is creating a **Problem Tree**. In this activity, the “problem” is placed at the trunk of the tree. At the bottom of the trunk and the roots, participants brainstorm causes of the problem, while the leaves and branches represent the effects of the problem. This is a great activity to do with various community stakeholders.



→ It is important to address these root causes in your program activities.

Step 2: State your problem statement

Refer back to Part 1 and re-state the problem statement you created!



Step 3: Outline your general proposed program

TIPS:

- 🎯 Focus on your activities related to outcomes rather than process activities.
- 🎯 Focus on the most important activities and how they are being implemented.
- 🎯 Don't worry about expected outputs.



Example: Through training community health workers, police officers, and public-school teachers over the next year in St. Louis....

Step 4: Describe your anticipated results (outcomes and impact)

- 🌐 What are the major changes you expect to see in the population as a result of your activities described in Step 3?
- 🌐 Move from short term outcomes to mid-term outcomes, long term outcomes, and finally impact!



Example:

...we expect to see an increased number of GBV reports to community health workers, police officers, and public-school teachers which will increase the number of survivors accessing healthcare, legal, and educational services related to GBV.



Step 5: Put together your problem hypothesis

Your final product will read: Because of _____
_____,
the result is _____
If the these _____
_____ (activities) are completed, then _____
_____ (short-term outcomes), _____
_____ (mid-term outcomes), and _____
_____ (long-term outcomes) can be expected.

