



TOOL 2

PROBLEM ANALYSIS





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What is the **purpose** of problem analysis?

- To understand the local environmental and social issues from the perspective of local people.
- To help develop the project's theory of change by ensuring that its aims are realistic and relevant for local stakeholders.
- To ensure that the project and its interventions focus on tackling the key issues for local stakeholders and, by addressing the causes of identified problems rather than the results, contributes to a more sustainable project design and outcomes.

Plan Vivo Carbon Standard (PV Climate) **requirement?**

Strongly recommended for all types of projects.

When to use this tool?

- During preparation of the PIN an initial Problem Analysis can be carried out with the results included in the PIN. However, the tool is likely to contribute more during later stages when the PDD is being prepared. At this time a thorough and in-depth problem analysis is essential.
- Normally Problem Analysis will be conducted after Stakeholder Analysis (Tool 1). It can be carried out either before or after Visioning (Tool 3) - if done afterwards, then some idea about the 'focal problem' may already have been obtained from the main 'downward forces' identified during visioning.

Why is this tool required?

Problem Analysis (sometimes called problem tree analysis) is an important tool for project planning and for clear identification of project objectives and interventions. It is therefore a critical tool for making sure that the project design reflects the real needs and priorities of project participants. Together with Visioning and Stakeholder

Analysis it makes an important contribution to developing the project's theory of change and ensures consistent project logic.

Rural communities in developing countries are often beset by numerous problems which affect their livelihoods and their use of natural resources. Not all these problems can be readily tackled through a project. The Problem Analysis Tool breaks down broad and often complex sets of problems into manageable and definable chunks and helps to prioritise these. By helping to understand the wider problem through this analysis, this tool helps local stakeholders to identify project interventions that primarily aim to tackle the causes rather than the effects of the problems that affect them. Too often projects and local communities tend to favour interventions that address the effects. For example, projects that aim to tackle the loss of forest cover or trees in a landscape tend to support tree planting rather than identifying the real cause of this loss of forest and trees and addressing that as a priority. In that way, thorough Problem Analysis leads to the design of more sustainable projects and outcomes.

By carrying out problem analysis during the design of a project, the need for further information or evidence is often identified before a convincing theory of change can be finalised. This can then be followed up by further analysis or information gathering e.g. by using some of the other tools in this manual.

Who should participate?

Problem Analysis is best carried out by a small focus group of about six to eight literate people. This should include representatives from the local community working alongside staff from the Project Coordinator organisation who are knowledgeable about the area and the project context. Good facilitation is the key to conducting a meaningful problem analysis.

How to use the tool?

- Start by introducing the tool and its purpose. Ensure that participants understand that by conducting Problem Analysis the project design will be more effective in tackling the natural resources related problems of the concerned stakeholders.
- Discuss and agree the problem or issue to be analysed. Ask each participant in the group to write down on a flash card their version of the main problem that communities are facing which the project aims to address. This means that participants should have some broad idea about the proposed project scope (natural resources, livelihoods, resilience etc). If necessary, participants can write on more than one card - but each

should have only a single word or phrase written on it.

- Using a large flipchart ask each participant to fix their card in the centre. Ask them to explain what they have written and ask other participants for their opinions. Even at this early stage in the problem analysis, some of the cards will represent causes or effects of other cards e.g. loss of soil fertility is an effect of deforestation whilst overharvesting of trees may be a cause. In this case, cards with 'effects' are moved upwards to the top of the flipchart and cards with 'causes' are moved downwards. Those cards that represent the 'focal problem' remain in the centre.
- Eventually, through further discussion, an agreed 'focal problem' or 'core problem' needs to be defined and written down (on a new card). The wording does not need to be exact at this stage, but it should describe an actual issue that everyone feels passionately about and that can be tackled by a project.
- Having agreed on the 'focal problem' in the centre of the chart, next, ask participants to identify the causes of this problem and write them down on cards. They can write down as many causes as they wish and fix them to the chart. Cards can be fixed, arranged and rearranged to form a logical analysis that everyone agrees and understands.
- Similarly, ask participants to identify the effects of the focal problem and write these on cards which are then fixed at the top of the chart. Encourage discussion amongst participants and the shifting, addition and removal of cards from the chart that result. Nothing has to be fixed - but the value of this Problem Analysis Tool lies in the discussion. If people have concerns or have solutions (to the focal problem or its causes) then these can be 'parked' on another chart paper for later discussion or incorporation into the project design.
- Once all the cards have been fixed onto the chart, and everyone is happy with the analysis, you can draw lines to connect the causes and effects with the focal problem. This is why it is sometimes described as a 'problem tree'. The trunk is represented by the focal problem and the causes (roots underground) are below whilst the effects (branches above) are above (see examples).
- During the discussion, the facilitator should continue to ask questions such as:
 - Does the problem tree (as developed) represent the reality of local stakeholders?
 - Have all the political, economic and social dimensions of the problem been considered?
 - Which causes and which effects are changing (getting better or worse)?
 - What are the priority (most serious) effects that need to be changed by

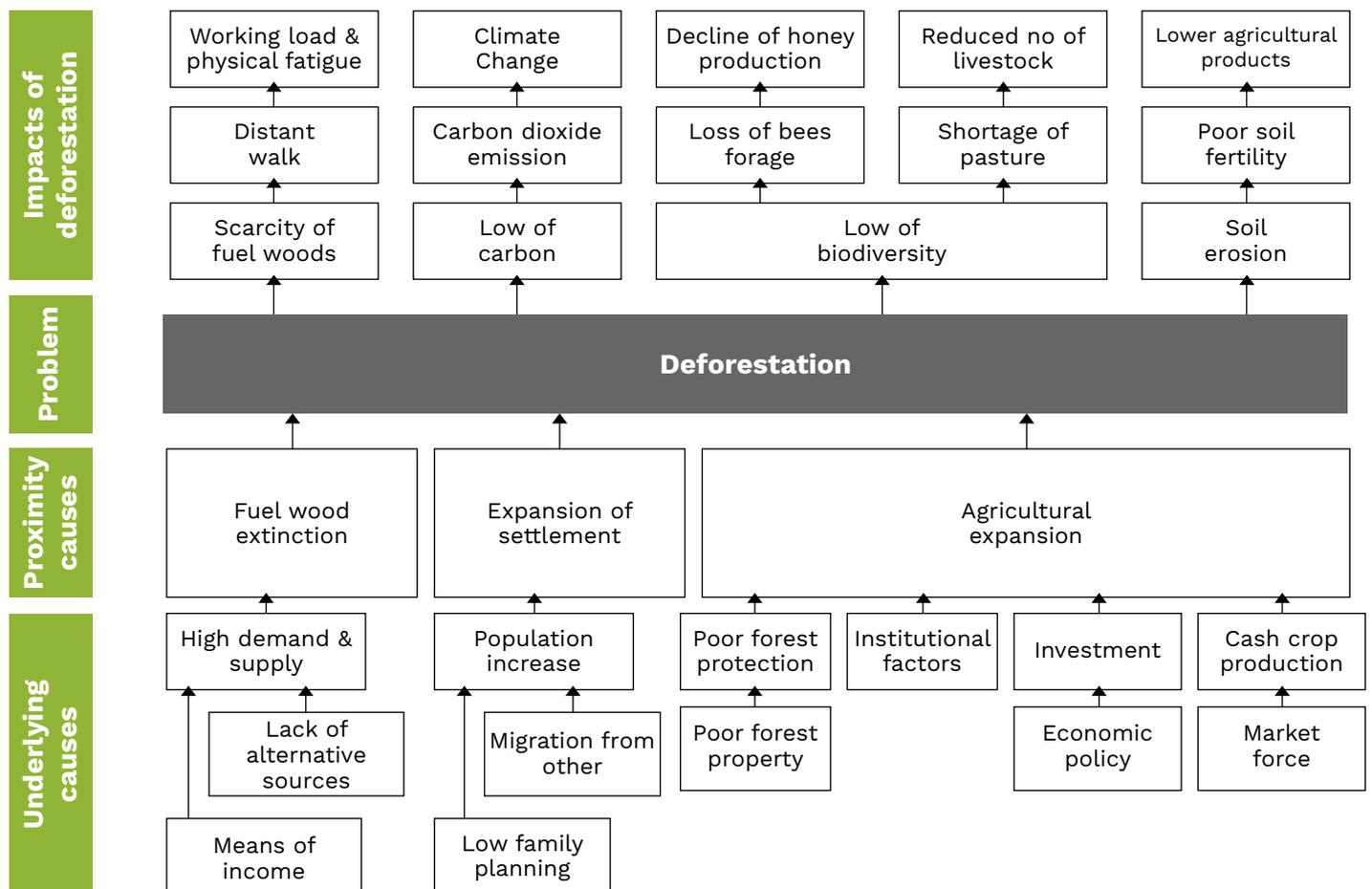
the project? What are the priority (most serious) causes?

- Are there some causes that cannot be affected by the project? Which are the easiest to address? Brainstorming questions could include:
 - What can we do within a year?
 - What can we do with our own resources?
 - What will benefit the most people?
 - Which might make the biggest impact?
 - What do we need to do first to prepare for other actions?
- What policy changes may be required to result in the desired project outcomes?

□ Finally, explain that the focal problem will be ‘converted’ (by rephrasing it) to become the project’s main objective. Interventions and activities to be implemented by the project will primarily aim to tackle the ‘causes’. But bear in mind that inevitably, some interventions and activities may have to be developed to tackle the effects of the focal problem as well.

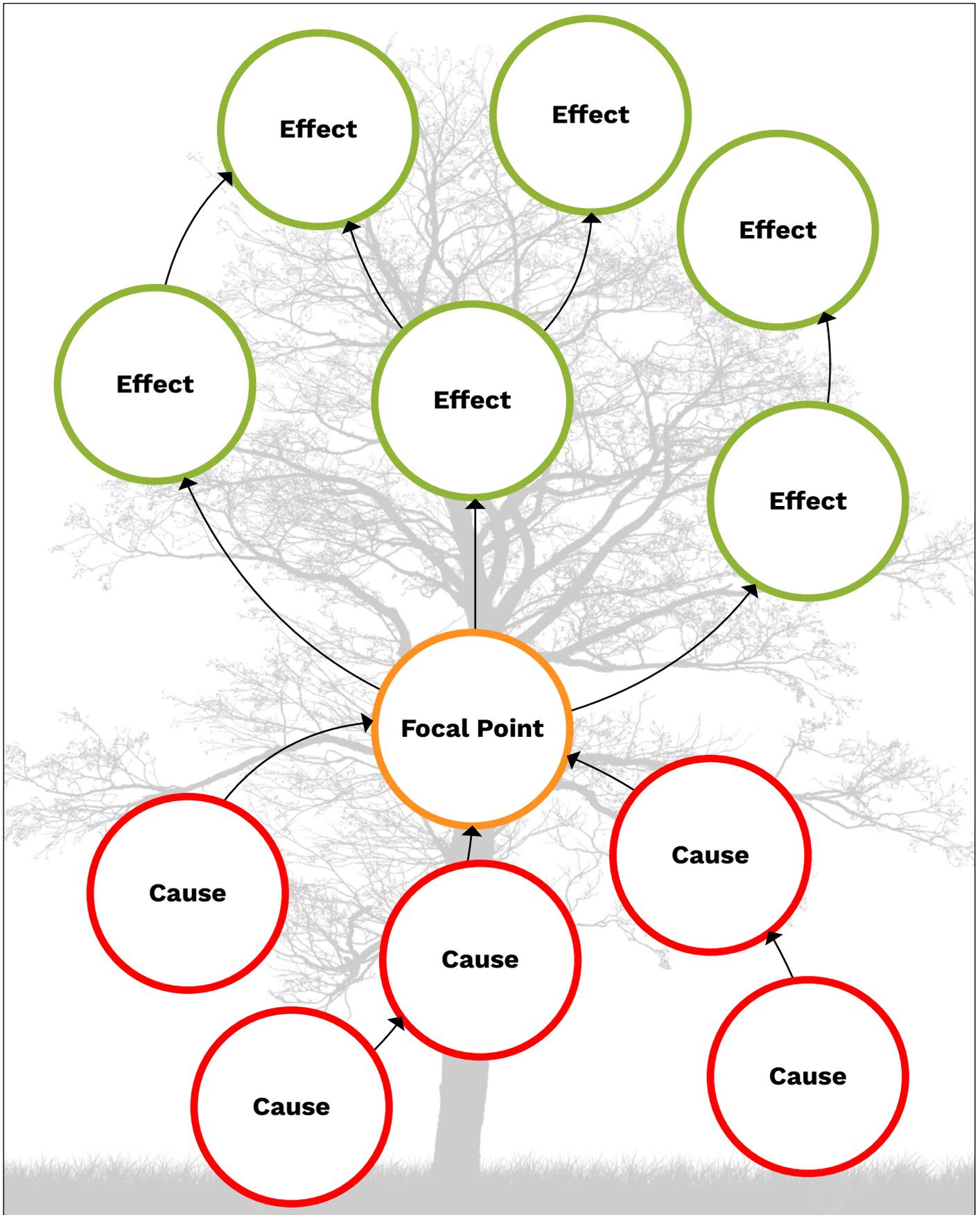
A. Examples of problem analysis

Ayele G, Hayicho H & Alemu H (2019) Land Use Cover Change Detection and Deforestation Modeling in Delomena District of Bale Zone, Ethiopia. Journal of Environmental Protection Vol 10



B. Example of Problem Tree Analysis

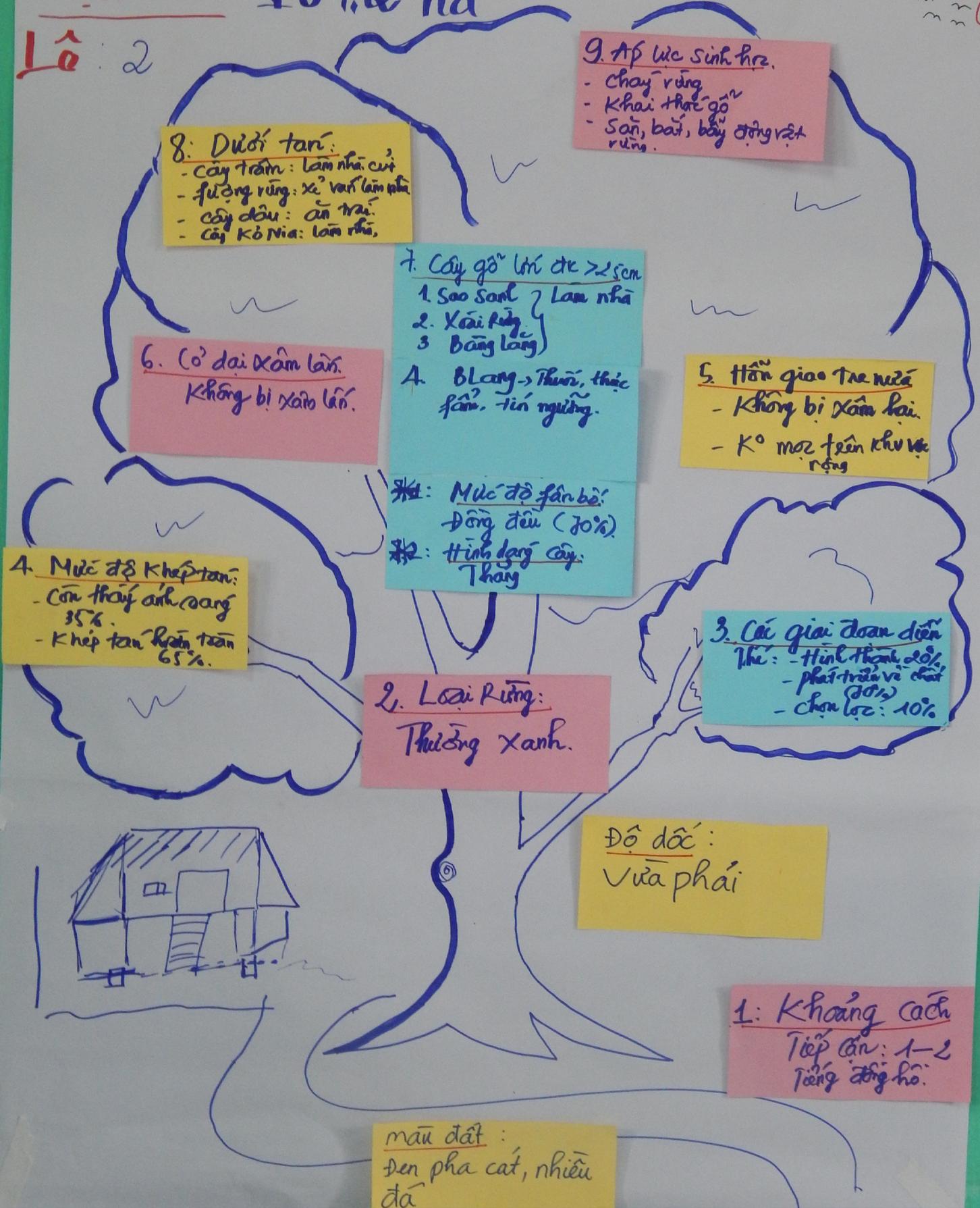
An example of 'problem tree analysis', which is focal to numerous forms of project planning. Problem tree analysis maps out the causes and effects surrounding an issue in a similar way to a mind map, helping to find solutions to the problem.



NHÓM 1: Miếu Cả Lỗ Rừng

Diện tích: 107,2 ha

Lô: 2



Problem analysis tree showing causes and effects as part of a project in Vietnam. Credit: Peter Branney