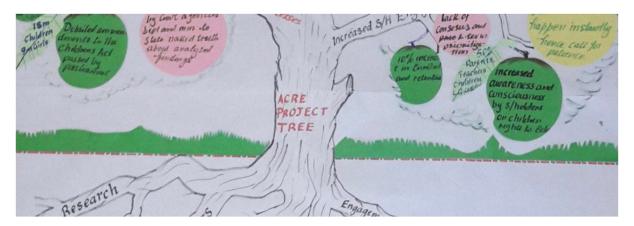
## Problem tree



To explore cause and effect.

A tree can be used to explore cause and effect or problem and solution. The various elements of a tree work together as a simple metaphor:

- The trunk usually symbolises the situation to be studied;
- The roots represent causes;
- The branches are the consequences.

## How to construct the tool

- 1. Using local materials (fallen twigs/tree branches), begin to construct a tree (a tree can also be drawn on large paper if twigs etc. not feasible).
- 2. The trunk symbolises the issue or concern being discussed a card is placed on the trunk with the concern/issue written on it (this helps to keep the discussion focussed on the issue/concern).
- 3. The roots represent e.g. (causes, income, inputs). As each cause, income source or input is raised; it is written on card (once agreed) and placed within the roots. Note that the more importance given to a particular point raised can be identified by placing it on the thicker roots, and vice versa.
- 4. The branches represent e.g. (effects, expenditure, outputs, and outcomes). Similarly, as each effect/type of expenditure/output is discussed and agreed, it is written on card and placed in the branches (again, the thicker or thinner the branch identifies level of importance placed on the point).
- 5. Fruits may be added to represent possible solutions, actions or unexpected gains.

6. Saplings can be added beside the large tree to represent ongoing aims, plans, perceived opportunities, desired inputs.

## Suggestions for use

- A tree can be used to analyse of household income and expenditure
- A tree can be used to analyse the causes and effects of conflict
- A tree can be used to analyse the causes and effects of HIV and AIDS.
- A family tree can be used to explore family relations and identity, with all current members as branches and the different levels of roots representing the ancestors.

## References

- Reflect Mother Manual, ActionAid International, 1996, p. 131-135.
- Communication & Power, ActionAid, 2003, p. 1003