

TOOLS

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TOOL 1: Developing a problem and solutions tree

Here in a hypothetical example, we are assuming X country is facing of a problem around the **limited use of evidence in policymaking**. This example provides an understanding of how the tool can be used, but by no means it is a complete analysis, because there would clearly be other causes and effects, and more links between solutions.

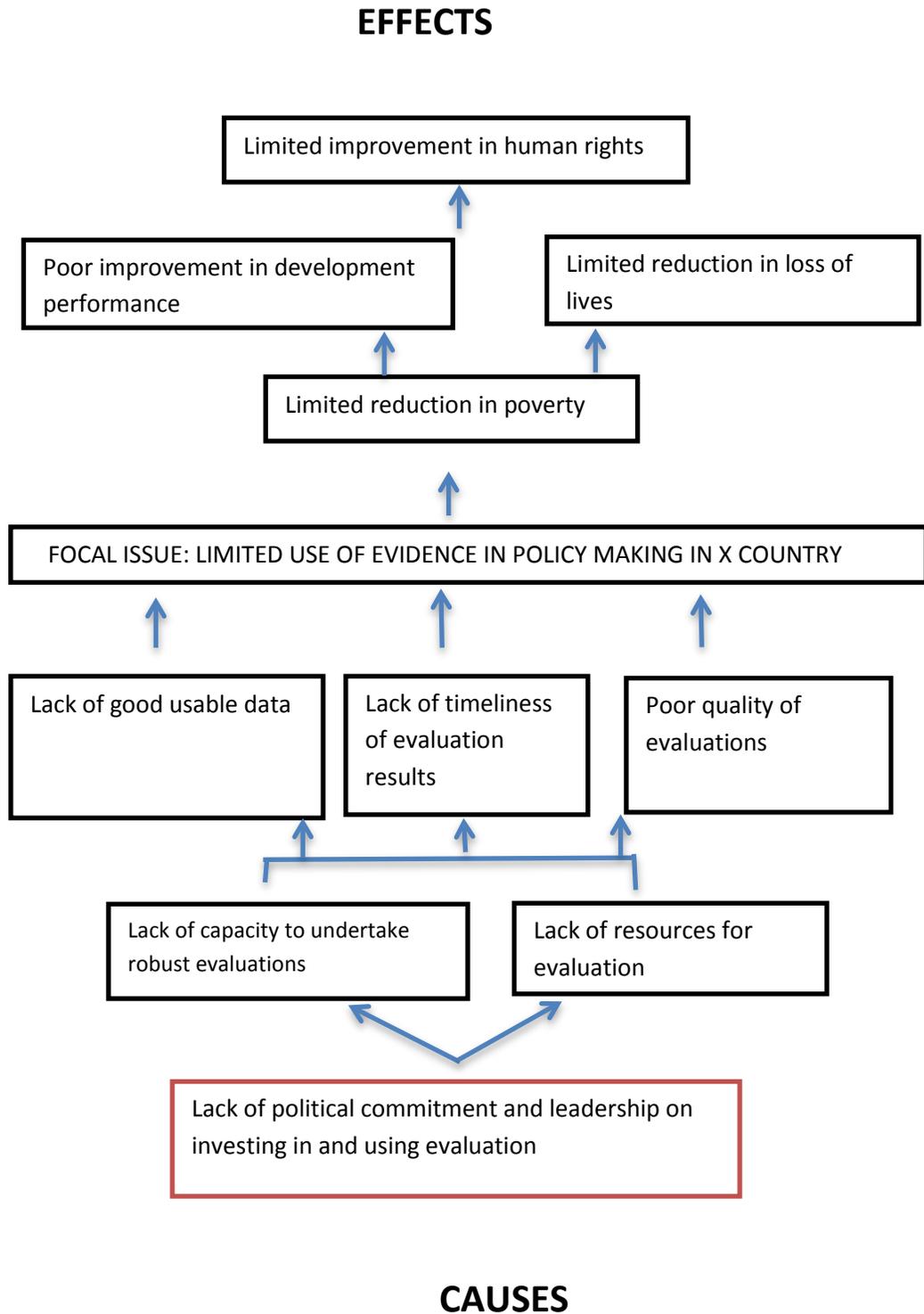
To create a problem tree:

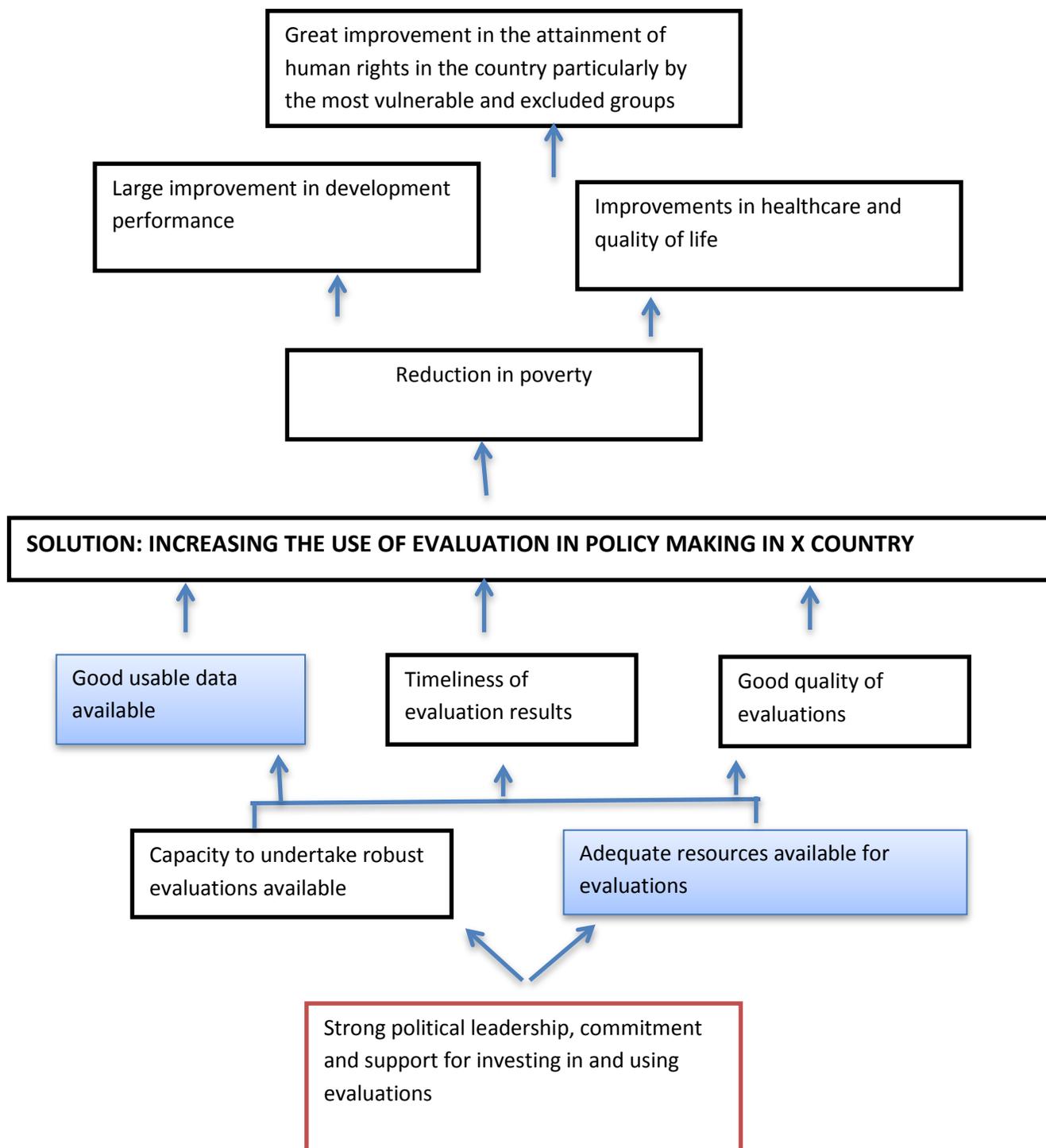
1. Begin by drawing a flow chart, as shown below, by placing the main issue in the center.
2. Brainstorm to determine a list of causes and consequences or effects; list effects above the central issue and causes below it.
3. List as many causes of the problem you can think of. Draw arrows from the causes to the central issue. While listing each cause, brainstorm on the 'cause' of the 'cause'. Link all of these by arrows to show their connection. For example, a cause for limited use of evidence in policy making can be a lack of lack of timeliness of evaluation results. The cause for this can be lack of capacity to undertake good quality evaluations to produce evidence. The cause for this can be lack of political commitment in investing and using evaluations.
4. Next, write the effects, or the consequences of the problem, above the central issue box. Draw an arrow from the central problem to the effect. For each effect, ask what further effect it could have. For example, an effect for limited use of evidence in policy making could be limited reduction in poverty. The effect of limited reduction in poverty could be poor improvement in development performance.
5. Remember to identify the most vulnerable and excluded, and consider how the issue (here the limited use of evaluation in policy making) affects them.
6. After the brainstorming is complete, look at the causes again and highlight those that could be changed or improved with the help of influential people or institutions through advocacy. For example, lack of political commitment and leadership on investing in and using evaluation can be addressed by influencing those in power.

Now turn the problem tree into a solutions tree:

One way to identify solutions is to reverse the causes and consequences of the issue. For example, if the cause is 'lack of resources for evaluation', then a possible solution will be 'to get adequate resources for evaluation'. The solution tree helps us to think of advocacy goals and interim outcome [Although this topic will be further developed in *Question 8: How do we begin?* it is useful, to start thinking now about how the issue relates to the policymaking environment]. For example, the blue boxes in the solution tree could be framed into advocacy interim outcomes (e.g. availability of good usable data, adequate resources available for evaluation). The CSOs, VOPEs and other stakeholders should choose solutions which will best further their values, credibility, opportunities and impact – including their mission and vision.

Example of Problem Tree on the limited use of evidence in policy making





EFFECTS

Example of a Solutions Tree on increasing the use of evaluation in policymaking in X country

TOOL 2: Planning research matrix

Fill this table, together with other stakeholders, to plan research that may be required to generate evidence for advocacy to build an enabling environment for evaluation.

Topic/Research question	Sub-topic/research question	Where can you find the information?	Who will contribute to the research?	How will you collect and analyze the information?
E.g. national capacity for evaluation in X country	E.g. available resources to build national evaluation capacity	E.g. existing evaluations, statistics departments, think tanks	E.g. ministries of finance and planning, government bodies, partners of VOPEs, CSOs, academia, the United Nations, donors and civil society	E.g. through a diagnostic study, survey or a meta evaluation

TOOL 3: Diagnosing national M&E systems

The checklist of questions deemed to be critical success factors for the development of an effective and sustainable national M&E system are as follows:

Critical success factors	Key considerations for success
Drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is driving the demand for M&E? What are the broad goals of the exercise?
Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How will M&E information be used, by whom and for what audience(s)? Are there real needs for information that are currently not being met?
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is leadership supportive? Is it leading the way? Is there a 'champion' for the M&E exercise?
Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there commitment to launch an M&E exercise and to sustain it? What will serve as the basis to ensure that an M&E system gets implemented and sustained?
Resourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where will the financial resources to develop systems, and hire and train skilled personnel come from? Will organizations be required to internally reallocate or will they be given new money?
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who will be accountable for ensuring that an M&E system is a functioning part of the public sector? Have roles and responsibilities been firmly established?
Technical capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there a capacity (data systems and infrastructure) to collect reliable data and report credible information?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there an adequate analytical capacity (skilled personnel)? • Are there existing institutions that could serve as credible partners (e.g. national statistical agency, research institutes)?
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a policy and a set of standards in place that describe roles, responsibilities and expectations for the operation of the M&E system and the use of M&E information? • Are the organizations and units that collect and analyze M&E information structured and adequately resourced (budget and human resource capacity)? • Is the M&E information that gets reported credible, timely and responding to the priority issues?
Infrastructure to use M&E information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there formal policies or requirements on how performance monitoring and evaluation information gets used by organizations? • What are the incentives within an organization for using M&E information (rewards and/or sanctions)? • Are there formal or informal vehicles/mechanisms/forums for reporting, sharing or tabling M&E information? • Is results-based performance factored into personnel assessments? • Are civil society, the private sector and other social partners actively involved in the national M&E system?
Oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the system be monitored over time to ensure that it is functioning as expected and to the level expected? • Does the national audit office play any role in monitoring the M&E system and the use of performance information across government? • Is there a policy center (e.g. within a central ministry) to monitor implementation? • Will the performance of the M&E system be measured and adjusted as necessary?
Values and Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a formal code of conduct describing accountabilities and expected behavior for officials in the public sector (e.g. transparency, access to information, fair and balanced reporting, accountability)? • Is this code well understood and adhered to by all? • Is 'speaking truth to power' considered appropriate in the public sector and nationally?
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What requirements/safeguards are there to ensure that the M&E system will be made sustainable?

TOOL 4: Checklist for choosing an advocacy priority

Use the checklist below to determine the advocacy priority for your VOPE or your individual organization. Some of the criteria¹ cannot be answered fully without more planning, but can guide your information gathering and be repeated after further analysis.

Criteria for prioritizing issues	Does it meet the criteria?	Comment
Importance of issue		
Does it result in a real improvement in people's lives? Does it address underlying problems? Does it address the most vulnerable and excluded? Is the issue widely felt? Is the issue deeply felt? Is it a priority expressed by the stakeholders?		
Practical considerations		
Is it winnable? Is it easy to communicate and understand? Are there opportunities for stakeholders to engage with the issue? Are there clear decision makers who can make the change happen? Does it have a clear time frame? Does addressing the issue build accountable leadership? Are there opportunities/entry points to influence policies? Are there resources for advocating on the issue? Is the analysis of the issue grounded in solid evidence and expertise? Is there pre-existing momentum on addressing the issue? Can your organization add comparative value to addressing the issue? Are there partnership possibilities in advocating on the issue? Does it link local issues to global issues and macro-policy context?		
Other factors		
Is it consistent with global priorities such as the forthcoming sustainable development goals (post 2015)? Is there continuity with an existing long-term strategy of the VOPE/organization? Are decision makers keen for change on the issue? Is it consistent with the VOPE's/organization's mission? Does it help raise VOPE's/organization's profile and strategic position? Is there synergy with fund-raising schemes?		

¹ In no particular order. Based on the 'Rome Criteria' identified in the workshop for UNICEF national committees, 'Planning Advocacy and Education for Development Work'. (2008); Bobo, K., (1991). *Organizing for Social Change: A manual for activists in the 1990s*. Seven Locks Press. and Veneklasen, L., Miller V., (2002). *A New Weave of Power, People, and Politics: The action guide for advocacy and citizen participation*. Just Associates, Washington, DC. Additional criteria were selected by David Cohen and Neha Karkara.