



## **The Problem Tree: From Experience to Strategy**

At Rise Up Together, leaders are often confronting complex injustices that affect women, girls, and gender-nonconforming people. Passion and lived experience are powerful starting points, but creating change also requires clear analysis and strategy.

One of the tools we use to support leaders in moving from experience to action is the **Problem Tree**.

**A Problem Tree is a simple but powerful tool that helps leaders analyze an issue by mapping three key elements:**

- Core Problem (Trunk): The central injustice affecting a defined population
- Effects (Branches): The consequences of the problem on individuals, families, and communities
- Root Causes (Roots): The systems, policies, norms, and conditions that allow the problem to persist

The Problem Tree is one of the initial steps in a connected advocacy planning process within Rise Up Together's curriculum. **Leaders then build on this foundation with Political Mapping, SWOT analysis, and Target Audience Analysis.** Together, these tools help leaders uncover systemic barriers, identify opportunities for change, and design evidence-based strategies that engage the right actors at the right time.

**Each step is linked, ensuring that community insights based on lived experience drive strategy and that every action is purposeful, measurable, and aimed at lasting change for women, girls, and gender-nonconforming people.**

It's also a tool that brings communities into the advocacy planning process. The Problem Tree is designed to be completed with other advocates, leaders' colleagues, and community members.

It works best as a community-based activity where participants can contribute to the discussion, share their perspectives, and help frame the problem in a way that centers the needs and experiences of those most affected.

## Defining the Problem

A strong problem is:

- Large: Impacts a significant, specified population (e.g., out-of-school girls 12–17)
- Current: Exists now, not hypothetically
- Specific: Clearly described and unambiguous
- System-Linked: Shows the structural source (e.g., insufficient school budgets)

## Why Use a Problem Tree

- Break complex issues into manageable parts
- Understand causes, effects, and where change is possible
- Identify whether solutions require service delivery, advocacy, or both
- Build shared understanding and strategic focus through discussion

The Problem Tree is more than a diagram – it is a process that turns frustration into strategy and empowers leaders to act.

## The Problem Tree

