Session 5

Define the Issue and Identify a Policy Solution

Purpose
Introduce methods to help participants define a policy issue, including criteria to assess whether an issue is well suited for advocacy and questions to determine the most appropriate policy solution.

| Objectives	Session Preparations
By the end of this session, participants will:	Logistics:
• Conduct a root cause analysis during an exercise using information from their prework assignment	• Refer to guidance for grouping participants in the facilitator's manual, Preparing for the Workshop
• Assess problems to determine their strength as advocacy issues	Materials Needed:
• Evaluate policy issues against criteria to determine the strength of the issues	• Session5_IssueIdentification_PowerPoint file
• Describe policy solutions for the stated issue	• Completed prework assignment from each participant
Total time: ~4 hours	• Handouts:
	- Analyzing Policies Worksheet
	- Data Sources
	• Prepared flip charts:
	- Root Cause Analysis—replica of slide 7 diagram (One diagram for large group example, draw this across four flip charts to ensure you have enough space; one diagram for each small group; see photos of examples at the end of session plan)
	- Potential Policy Solutions (title only)
	- Additional Information Needed (one for each small group)
	• Flip chart paper and markers
	Set-Up:
	• Small groups at tables

Overview Step 1: Define the Issue—30 minutes

1. Use the speaker notes, questions, and probes provided to encourage participant interaction during the session.

   Show slide 1.

   Explain: Clearly defining the policy issue you want to address through advocacy is the first step in the developing an advocacy strategy process. Future steps depend on a clear definition of the issue.

   Identifying the issue consists of defining the problem, understanding the policy landscape

Define the Issue and Identify a Policy Solution
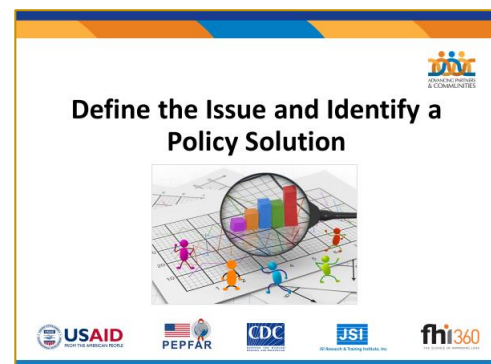
that contributes to the problem, reviewing potential policy solutions, and selecting the most appropriate policy solution as the basis of the advocacy strategy.

During this session we will conduct two root cause analyses—one as a large group and one in your small groups. After the analysis, as a large or small group you will assess problems to decide if there is a policy solution, evaluate policy issues using criteria to determine their strength, and identify potential policy solutions for a specific issue.

2. Show slide 2.

Say: A detailed understanding and statement of the problem are needed to propose a clear solution in the advocacy strategy.

As previously discussed, there are many methods you can use to define an issue. We will use a root cause analysis.

After the cause is identified, you will also consider potential solutions to the issue to ensure that a policy solution is the most appropriate. The advocacy strategy is based on "selling" your recommended policy solution.

It is important to use verifiable data to support the process of defining an issue. Strategic use of data supports the entire process of developing an advocacy strategy.

Step 1: Define Issue

- Clarify the problem and develop a problem statement
- Use one of many methods to pinpoint causes
- Brainstorm potential policy solutions

3. Show slide 3 (title and bullet 1).

Say: In the prework assignment, you started to identify an issue and provide supporting data. Let's review your prework to see what you documented about identifying the problem.

Conduct a brainstorming discussion to challenge participants to consider why the advocacy issue is a problem and to reflect on what supporting evidence they have that the issue is, indeed, a problem. Ask:

- How did you identify the issue/problem that you plan to address through your advocacy strategy? Probe for: observed gaps or inequalities related to the issue that adversely affected community members/population; review

Identifying Problems—Your Experiences

- How did you identify the problem you wish to change through advocacy?
- What methods did you use to study the issue?
- Which factors supported the decision to identify this as a policy-related issue?

of programmatic data, comments from community members, etc.

Advance the slide to reveal the next discussion question.

- **What methods did you use to study the issue?** Probe for: policy analysis, qualitative research, policy review, focus groups, and root cause analysis.

Note: Participants may use less formal terminology to describe the approaches they used to identify problems/define issues. Facilitators may also use less formal terminology. Regardless of the terminology used, clearly describe the process so that discussion can focus on whether the methods/processes used were adequate.

Write the participants' responses on a flip chart.

Advance the slide to reveal the next discussion question.

- **What factors supported the decision to identify this as a policy-related issue?** Probe for: able to identify specific policies that contribute to the problem, coupled with specific evidence/data that support their claim.

Summarize: Understanding the problem and supporting the claim with verifiable data are critical to building an effective strategy.

4. Show slide 4 (title only).

Say: To develop an effective strategy, an advocate must know the details related to the issue/problem, the environment in which the problem exists, and the policy development process related to the issue. An information-gathering process, using the analysis methods we just discussed and other methods, as appropriate, helps collect this information.

Distribute the handout Analyzing Policies Worksheet and explain that it is a resource document of questions to consider in the identification process. Review the questions as you discuss the content outlined on the slide.
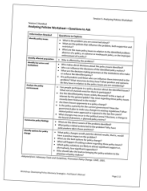
Advance the slide to reveal and discuss one bullet at a time.

Understanding the Context

Consider external influences and political climate

What? – problem/issue and its severity

Why? – causes of the problem

Who and Where? – people affected by the problem; key actors and institutions that make decisions about these policies, and those who influence them

Say: When collecting information, start by answering the simple questions what, why, who, and where. There are many methods, such as a landscape analysis, root cause analysis or policy analysis, to help gather the information to answer these questions.

- *What* is the problem or issue and how severe is it in your community or area of interest?
- *Why* does the problem exist; what are the policy causes of the problem? Consider all of the policies around an issue. What policies support or mitigate the problem? What policies are restrictive or exacerbate the problem? Are these policies enforced? And if so, how?
- *Who* does the problem affect, which population? Who are the people and institutions who make decisions or influence the decision-makers? Who has decision-making authority and where do they obtain their data/information? Who can contribute to the decision-making?
- *Where* is the problem most acute? Where, in which decision-making body, are decisions made around the particular issue?

This information is critical to analyzing the problem and developing the subsequent steps of the strategy. As you explore these questions, also consider external influences such as culture, funding constraints, or social movements around the issue.

In the prework assignment you began to collect some of this information, but it is important to revisit the document to ensure that you have complete information.

Note: If participants did not complete the prework assignment, omit the statement above.

Emphasize: All of the responses to these questions should be considered and documented.

5. Show slide 5 (title only).

Say: There are many different resources and ways to collect the necessary information.

Ask: What are some of the resources and ways you can get the information you need?

Take suggestions from several participants.

Advance the slide to reveal and briefly discuss each data source.

Distribute the handout Data Sources to each participant and briefly review it.

Potential Data Sources

- Behavioral surveys
- Public policy polling
- Demographic and health surveys
- Copies of targeted policies
- Copies of relevant strategies

- Published research on the topic
- Media reports on the issue
- "Grey literature" on the issue
- If available, unpublished research on the topic

6. Show slide 6.

Say: Let's discuss a simple technique to systematically explore the causes and effects of a problem using the information that you have gathered and your own knowledge and expertise. This process can help consolidate all of the information you have collected. This technique is called a root cause analysis. It can be used to analyze the situation by exploring the multiple causes of the problem, examining which causes affect the problem the most, and determining if policy change can help address the causes.

The first step of a root cause analysis is to write the problem statement.

As shown in the color-coded examples on the slide, the statement should specify the issue, who is affected, the geographic scope, and if possible, the extent of the problem.

There are two examples shown here; the second has a fairly narrow scope and the other is broader. As you can see, the statement with the narrow scope already points toward a policy, or lack thereof. The "narrowness" of the statement's scope is dependent on how much information is available regarding the issue and the contributing factors. (The more information you have, the narrower the scope of the problem statement may be.)

Develop the Problem Statement

Include the issue, who, where, and the amount:

Example 1. Key populations have limited access to HIV testing in ABC region.

Example 2. There are no SOPs to address considerations for key populations at HIV testing facilities in ABC region.

Note: The scope of the problem statement affects the duration of the activity. A problem statement with a

broad scope will prompt a longer brainstorming session because there are more potential root causes and solutions to explore. It may create a more instructive activity; however, it is a significant time investment. A problem statement with a narrow scope will reduce the time needed and may lead to more specific policy solutions; however, it may be too "leading" for the participants. Weigh the time constraints and the group's knowledge of the issue under discussion when deciding on the problem statement to use in the activity.

Large Group Activity—1.75 hours

7. Show slide 7.

Post the prepared flip chart showing the diagram that represents a root cause analysis.

Say: The best way to explain how this analysis works is to complete one together. We have modified the process to fit the time limitations and other constraints of a workshop setting.

We have already completed the first step, which was to articulate a problem statement. For this example, we will use the problem statement "Key populations have limited access to HIV testing in ABC region." The other two components of a root cause analysis are the effects or "symptoms" of the issue and the causes of the issue.

Note: It is helpful to tailor this activity to your participants. If the hypothetical case described in the subsequent slides is not appropriate, reach agreement with participants on a case to use for the practice analysis. Once clearly defined, write the problem on the root cause analysis flip chart.

The term "root cause analysis" may imply that there is only one cause of a problem. However, this exercise is meant to uncover multiple potential causes.

Activity—Root Cause Analysis
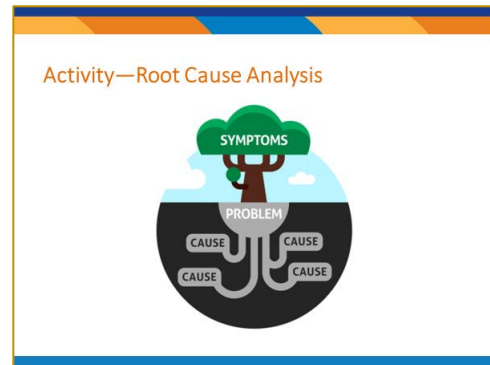
8. Show slide 8.

Say: Symptoms are the effects of the apparent problem. Let's consider the symptoms or effects to the problem we selected.

Ask: What are some of the symptoms or effects of the problem that key populations have limited access to HIV in region ABC?
Although there will be numerous answers, probe for: When key populations are unaware of their HIV status, more people are infected with HIV. See the photo of the sample case at the end of the session plan for additional suggestions.

As a group, agree on the symptoms/effects, and write them on the root cause analysis flip chart.

Note: Mention this if needed for clarification. Both the problem statement and the symptoms/effects must focus on the affected population. If a "symptom" does not affect the targeted population, it is an "effect of an effect" and not as relevant to the issue. For example, one symptom may be increased spending by the government on HIV treatment; however, the main group affected is the government, not the targeted population.
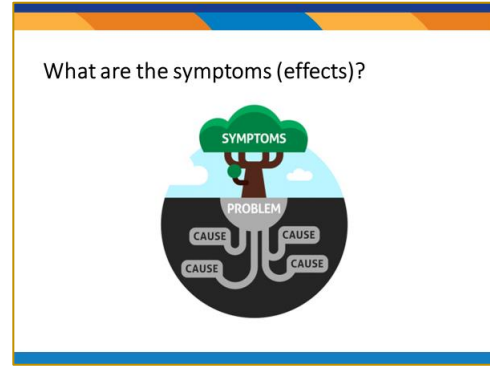
9. Show slide 9.

Say: Next, let's brainstorm the direct causes of the problem. Causes are factors that contribute to the problem being a problem for the population.

Ask: What are some causes of the problem?
Potential responses include limited availability of tests, inconvenient clinic hours, lack of nurses, restrictions around who can deliver an HIV test, and stigma KP members face when they go to the clinic.

As a group, agree on the causes and write them on the root cause analysis flip chart.

Continue to ask "why" and "so what" of participants to further probe the causes. There are often "cascading" causes, so be sure to ask "why" until a root cause is uncovered (see the photo of the case example for more information). Probe for: environmental, physical, human resource, and other factors.

Say: We now have a problem tree we can use to further analyze the situation. Note that the more specific the analysis of the causes, the more useful it will be in identifying the potential solutions.
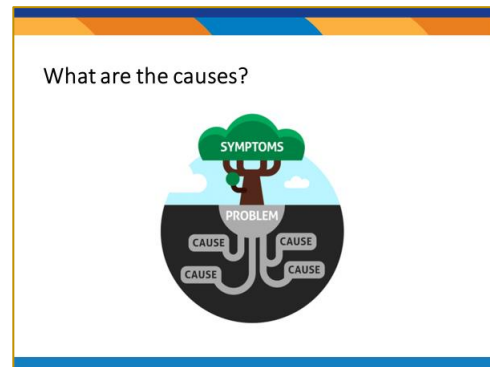
10. Show slide 10.

Say: Not all causes have the same influence on the problem. When looking at the list of causes, you may see some that contribute more to a problem than others.

For the purposes of this exercise, we are going to identify causes that contribute greatly to the problem <u>and</u> have a policy component. Sometimes causes can be addressed via programs and policies, and often joint solutions are the most comprehensive.

The next step is to eliminate those causes that cannot be addressed by policy change.

Remind the group of the definitions of policy change by pointing to the flip chart posted during the earlier session.

Review each root cause on the flip chart with the group. Ask: Can this cause be addressed in whole or in part with a policy change?

Place an X through any causes listed on the flip chart that cannot be addressed through policy change.

Note: Ideally this would leave four or five causes on the flip chart. Data and evidence from the local context about this issue are critical to this step. If this information is not available, complete this step with the best available information at the time.

> **Policy Change**
>
> • Which root causes can be addressed via policy change?
> • Remember policy change includes:
>   – Eliminating a harmful policy
>   – Reviewing or revising an existing policy
>   – Enforcing an existing policy
>   – Developing a new policy
>   – Funding a policy

11. Show slide 11 (title only).

Say: In addition to ensuring that a root cause is best addressed through policy change, there are several other factors to consider when determining which root cause to select for an advocacy strategy.

Advance the slide to reveal and discuss one bullet at a time. Discuss each question and its importance in identifying appropriate causes.

As a group, go through each of the root causes on the flip chart. Circle those that meet most of the criteria listed on the slide. Challenge the group to consider all the criteria; realistically, however, very few causes will meet all the criteria. Rely on the group's discretion to narrow down the number of causes.

> **Additional Questions to Ask about the Root Causes**
>
> • Do you have any evidence that this is a problem?
> • Is there a coalition or group of organizations interested in working together to address the problem?
> • Does your organization/coalition have experience with this problem?
> • Is there any risk to your organization in addressing the issue?
> • Is the political environment appropriate to address the issue?
> • Will a policy change significantly affect the problem?
> • Can the problem be reasonably addressed in three to five years?
>
> Adapted from: *A2 Advocacy Training Manual*, 2007; *Greater Health Impacts*, 2013; *Advocacy in Action*, 2003.

Note: If this exercise results in multiple root causes still under consideration (circled), use the criteria on the slide to identify one cause to use in the exercise.

Summarize: The root cause analysis is one option, of many, for determining the underlying cause of a problem. Decisions must be informed by data. The selected cause will be different for each organization based on your experiences, skills, and resources.

Note: If there are only a few root causes to analyze, consider combining this task with the information and task described on the next two slides and consolidating the review of root causes with development of potential policy solutions.

12. Show slide 12.

Say: The next step is to brainstorm the *potential* policy solutions to address the selected root cause of the problem.

Refer to the flip chart posted on the wall to remind participants what policy change includes.

Say: Not all problems are best solved through policy change. Sometimes programmatic, financial, or other solutions are the best way to address a problem. Often, root causes are best addressed through a combination of solutions.

To develop appropriate solutions, it is important to know the policies that influence the root cause; as such, background research is very important.

The exploration of policy solutions is typically a lengthy process of brainstorming options, vetting ideas, and considering available data. Often, policy analysis is done to explore the policy options to address a problem, and the potential outcomes of each.

As a group, brainstorm potential policy solutions to the selected root cause. Ask: What are some potential policy solutions?

Write the ideas on the prepared flip chart titled Potential Policy Solutions.

What is a policy solution?

- A policy change that can be made to address the problem at hand

- Solutions should be policy focused, rather than programmatic

- Not every issue is best resolved through advocacy

13. Show slide 13.

Say: Typically, there are multiple policy solutions to a given issue. Similar to the process used to determine the root cause, consider these questions to help determine the most appropriate policy solution.

Discuss the questions on the slide and the importance of each in the decision-making process.

As a group, review each potential policy solution on the flip chart and determine which is most appropriate given the criteria listed on the slide. Ask: Using the criteria on the slide, which of these potential policy solutions is the most appropriate?

Circle the most appropriate policy solutions.

> *Note: Some groups have requested examples of unforeseen negative consequences of an advocated policy change. If possible, identify local examples before the session. If necessary, consider using this example: A community-based organization advocated for extending hours at a local clinic to allow FSWs to be seen in the evenings, before they go to work. To make this change, the clinic did not hire new staff, but instead rearranged the clinicians' schedules. This resulted in fewer staff working during typical clinic hours (8 a.m.–5 p.m.). This had a negative, unforeseen consequence on other clients who attend the clinic during the usual hours, because they now have to wait longer before being seen. These clients also noted that many of the clinicians rush through their appointments and no longer provide in-depth information or counseling.*

Say: This concludes our modified root cause analysis exercise. When a root cause analysis is completed outside of a workshop setting, the process can be further informed by available data and evidence, can stretch over a longer time period, and may include repeating the process when new data are made available.

Questions to Determine Appropriate Policy Solutions
- How feasible are the policy actions for your country?
- What is the political will for change for each potential solution?
- Are there policy revisions currently under way addressing the problem?
- Could implementing the proposed solution potentially result in adverse consequences?
- How much difference will the policy action make to the issue in your country/region?

Adapted from: *Greater Health Impacts*, 2013.

Small Group Activity—1.75 hours

14. Show slide 14.

Say: Now it is your turn to conduct a root cause analysis.

Ask the participants to work at tables in their fixed/assigned small groups.

Distribute to each table/small group a sheet of flip chart paper showing the root cause analysis diagram, a blank sheet of flip chart paper, and markers.

Introduce the activity using the instructions on the slide. Mention: Work in your assigned/fixed groups/teams, and using your prework and the guidance in your handouts, conduct a root cause analysis and select the policy solution for the issue identified in your prework assignment. This is the problem/issue that you will use for the rest of the workshop. You will have about 60 minutes for this activity. Be prepared to share your diagram and to discuss a few of the identified causes and solutions, the policy solution selected, and the type of policy solution selected (eliminating a policy, revising a policy, developing a new policy, enforcing an existing policy, or funding a current policy).

As you conduct your analysis, you may realize that you need additional information. On a blank flip chart, keep a list of "additional information to collect" that you can add to throughout the workshop.

Allow the groups about 60 minutes to work on their root cause analysis. Give periodic updates about the amount of time remaining.

Circulate among the groups to answer questions, encourage the participants to reach decisions, and remind them to keep track of the "additional information" to collect.

After 60 minutes of group work, ask each group's spokesperson to post their root cause analysis flip chart where all participants can see it and take about five minutes to present the components of their analysis along with the rationale for their decisions. Allow five minutes for questions, answers, and

Activity—Conduct a Root Cause Analysis

1. Using the prework and the guidance from your handouts, conduct a root cause analysis to determine the recommended policy solution for your advocacy strategy (60 minutes for analysis).

2. Report to the large group (5 minutes/presentation and 5 minutes/Q&A per group):
   – The problem
   – Selected root cause
   – Proposed policy solution and the type of policy change (eliminate, revise, new, enforce, or fund)

feedback after each presentation, for a total of 10 minutes per group.

Thank the spokespersons and the participants for sharing their analysis.

Remind participants to retain their flip charts, because these will be needed during the workshop to draft the advocacy strategy.

Note: When possible, it is ideal to have this session be the last one of the day so that small groups can continue to work in the evening, if needed.

Wrap Up—5 minutes

15. Show slide 15.

Conclude the session by reviewing the learning objectives, summarizing the key concepts and definitions, and clarifying any participant questions.

Learning Objectives—Session 5

- Conduct a root cause analysis during an exercise using information from your prework
- Assess problems to determine their strength as advocacy issues
- Evaluate policy issues against criteria to determine the strength of the issues
- Describe policy solutions for the stated issue

Example of a Root Cause Analysis flip chart (prepared for use in large group exercise)

Photo Credit: Amita Mehrotra (FHI 360)

Example of a Root Cause Analysis flip chart (using the problem statement from the slide presentation)
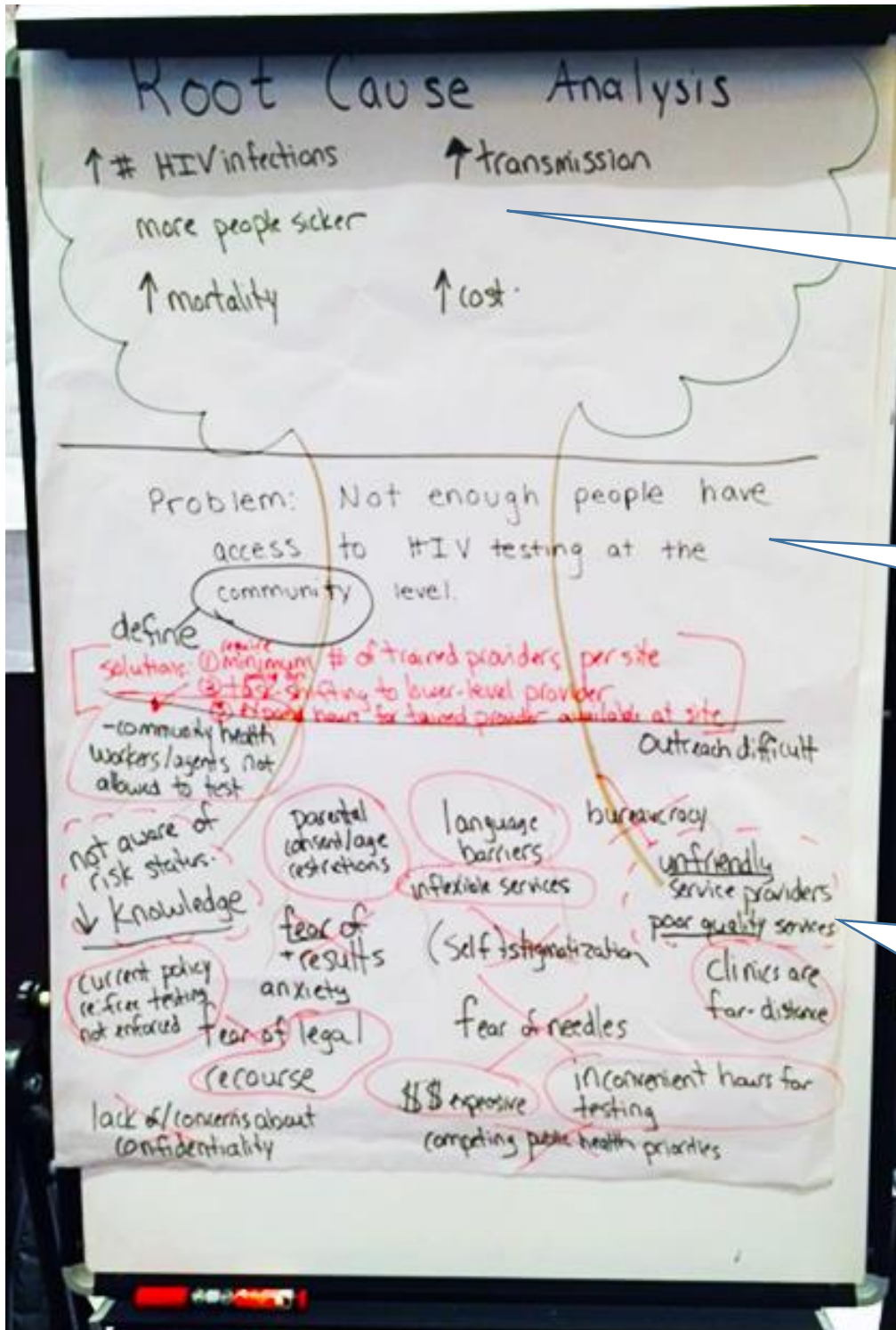
Photo Credit: Amita Mehrotra (FHI 360)

Example of a Root Cause Analysis flip chart (completed during a training in Thailand)

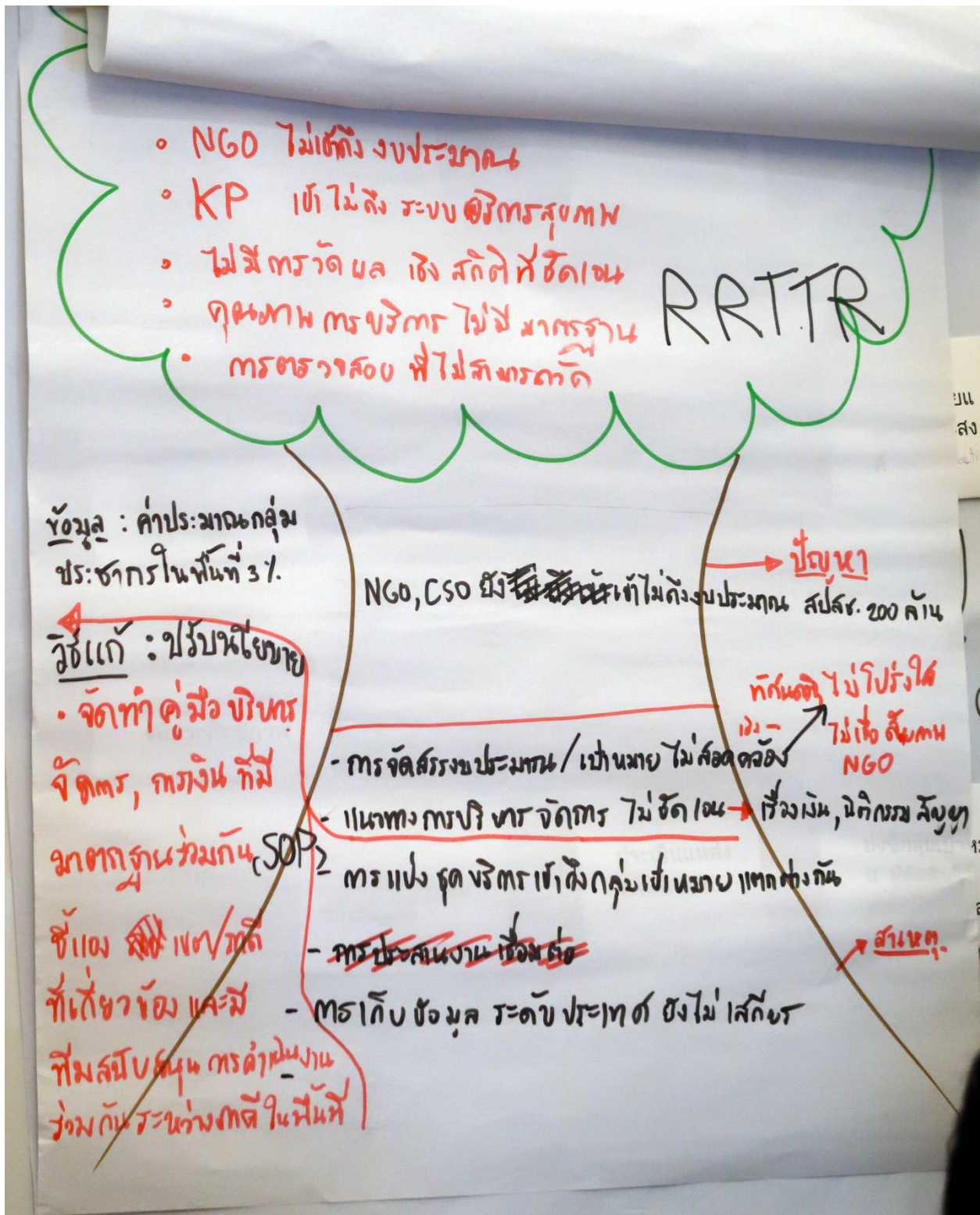Photo Credit: Amita Mehrotra (FHI 360)

Analyzing Policies Worksheet—Questions to Ask

Information Needed	Questions to Explore
Identify policy issues	• What is the problem you are concerned about? • What are the policies that influence the problem, both supportive and restrictive? • What are the main policy issues in relation to the identified problem: absence of a policy, an adverse or inadequate policy, or the improper enforcement of a policy?
Identify affected population	• Who is affected by the problem?
Identify key actors and institutions	• Who makes direct decisions about the policy issues identified? • Who can influence the decisions of the identified policymakers? • What are the decision-making processes at the institutions that make or enforce the identified policy? • Are policymakers and those who can influence them interested in the problem? What resources do they have? What position and opinions do they have in relation to the policy issues you are considering?
Analyze the policy environment	• Can people participate in a policy decision about the identified issues? What sort of channels exist for them to participate? • Are the identified policy issues widely discussed? Is this a topic of interest for the general public? Has news regarding these policy issues recently been featured in the media? • Are there known opponents to a policy change? • Is the policy a priority for the current government? Does the government plan to make any changes to existing regulations? What related polices were approved or rejected in the last few years? • What changes may occur in the political arena? Elections, a change in the board of directors, a planned policy review?
Summarize policy findings	• What are the direct causes of the problem identified? • What policy-related actions led to the problem? Why have policymakers taken these positions?
Identify options for policy change	• What policy changes would yield the desired results, that is, would have a positive impact on the problem? • What are the best options for policy change? • What will happen if nothing is done regarding these policy issues? • Which policy solutions are likely to attract significant support or, alternatively, face significant opposition? • Who should take the lead on bringing the policy solution to the attention of policymakers?

Adapted from: Advocacy Tools and Guidelines. Promoting Policy Change. CARE; 2001.

Session 5. Handout
Data Sources

The following sources are useful to gain a broad perspective of the policy problem at hand.

   a. **Official databases** provided by government statistics centers, such as population or quality-of-life surveys.
   b. **Databases provided by government agencies** that carry out actions connected with the issue we want to explore. For instance, if we want to know more about data concerning educational matters, we need to search the databases of the Ministry of Education. If we want to know more about youth, we need to look up the studies conducted by national institutes of youth.
   c. **Databases of international cooperation agencies**. Some relevant examples are the Human Development Index, reports on progress on the Millennium Development Goals written by the United Nations Development Programme, and databases of agencies such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Health Organization, or any other multilateral agency.
   d. **Publications, research, and studies by nongovernmental organizations** belonging to the international cooperation network. Some of these institutions work with other organizations or conduct their own studies with mostly reliable indicators.
   e. **Polls, surveys, or research carried out by universities or educational** institutions related to the issue you want to get to know. Preferably, you should use studies that have already been published and have, therefore, undergone appropriate reviews.
   f. **Opinion polls, surveys, and other public opinion research tools**, which are very popular today. It is important to take into account that these studies are often ordered by a party that wants to highlight particular results that help its cause. You must be very careful and choose only those that are as independent and reliable as possible.
   g. **Research conducted by newspapers, magazines, or other mass media**. Consider how reputable the source is, and remember that even the best media sources are likely to have their own points of view.

Source: [Handbook for Political Analysis and Mapping](#). New York, NY: International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), Western Hemisphere region; 2010.