



Objective Tree Analysis to Identify the “Ideal State”

1. Introduction: Describing the “Ideal State”

We've learned in the previous modules and exercises that designing a project requires us to understand the complexity of the problems we want to solve with the proposed project. We learned that a thorough, evidence-based understanding of the problem will reveal “leverage points;” these are the direct or indirect driving factors that we may be able to influence to bring about a positive change in the core problem. But in addition to thinking about the problem, we also need to think about the solution and the pathway for moving between the “**problem state**” and the “**solution state**”.

All projects need to have an objective. The objective represents a set of conditions that the project puts in place to facilitate a change in the core problem. We can think of these conditions as the “**ideal state**.” Different funders have different terms for this; some refer to this as the “**preferred solution**” while others may use the term “**alternative scenario**.” But all of these terms refer generally to the same thing: the future conditions that your project will bring about. Similar to how the direct causes in the problem tree “enable” the core problem, these future conditions can be thought of as the conditions that enable your project's objective to be achieved.

This exercise will build on the problem tree that you developed in Module 2. By this point, your problem tree should illustrate a comprehensive picture of the core problem, its direct and indirect driving factors, and its effects. This picture should be supported by evidence from a variety of sources, including stakeholder consultations, a review of relevant studies, and other information. The problem tree should also incorporate information about how different groups are affected differently by climate change. And it should also clearly indicate “leverage points,” these are the parts of the problem tree's roots that you may have some influence over. In other words, your problem tree should be a complete description of the “**problem state**.”

The next step is fairly straightforward. We will use this tool to convert the “**problem state**” to the “**ideal state**.” The ideal state describes all of the conditions that will be in place if the project is successful. This will clearly illustrate the transformation that the project needs to make happen and will help us to develop our **theory of change**.

2. The Objective Tree

Once the problem has been clearly mapped out and the relationships between the different levels have been verified, the next step is to convert the problem tree to an objective tree.¹ The objective tree describes the desired future situation and is a step towards designing what the project will do. It can help you determine the **outputs, outcome, and impact** of your project. The concept behind the objective tree is simple: convert the problems you identified in your problem tree into objectives by turning the problem statements into enabling conditions for the ideal state (see Table 1, below). In general, the objective tree mirrors the problem tree (see Figure 1).

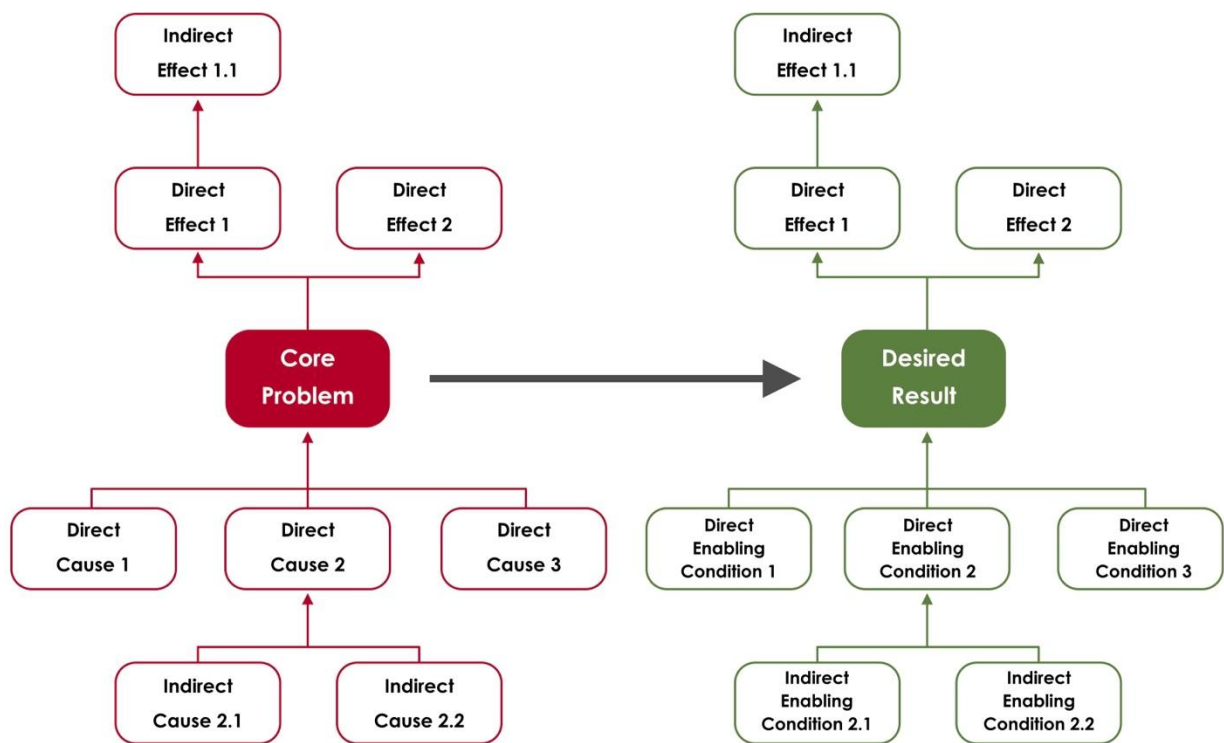


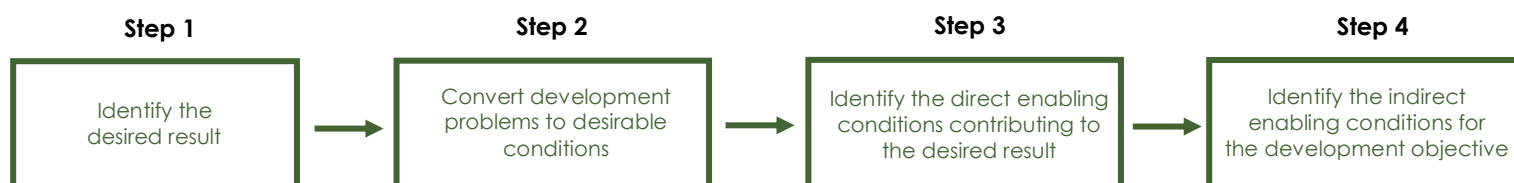
Figure 1: Converting your problem tree to an objective tree

¹ The term "solution tree" is also used in some instances.

Table 1: Problem and objective statements

Problem Statement	Objective Statement
Houses are not resilient to extreme weather events and flooding.	Houses are made more resilient to extreme weather events and flooding.
Reduced agricultural yields.	Improved agricultural yields.
High incidence of waterborne disease.	Reduced incidence of waterborne disease.
Climate-smart agricultural practices do not exist in the community.	Climate-smart agricultural practices are adopted by the community.
No plan for sustainable land management at the community level.	Sustainable land management plan drafted.
Evacuation centers are not accessible to local communities.	Evacuation centers are now accessible to local communities.

To Build an Objective Tree, Follow these Steps:



Step 1: Identify the Desired Result

The desired result comes from the core problem you identified in your problem tree. Rephrase the core problem statement so that it is the desired result that your project will bring about. This desired result will become the overall goal/objective for your project. See Figure 2 (below) for an example. Remember that your desired result should be realistically achievable within the limits of your project. If it is not, you may need to revisit your problem tree to identify a more manageable problem.²

Step 2: Development Problems to Desirable Conditions

Next, start at the top of your problem tree, where you have already identified broader development challenges associated with your core problem. Convert these into desirable conditions that the desired result will contribute to. These broader positive effects correspond to the **impacts** of your project; your project will not achieve these broader effects on its own, but if you successfully achieve your desired result, the project should contribute to achieving these impacts. For example, a climate change adaptation project that helps

² In cases where you find that you need to revisit the problem tree, consider addressing one of the roots of the core problem you have identified, rather than the entire core problem.

farmers to adopt climate-smart agricultural techniques will likely contribute to improved food security and rural livelihoods, but it will not make these things happen all by itself.

Think carefully about how you phrase your desirable conditions; these new statements should be realistic and achievable. **Note that in some cases, when working on your objective tree, you may identify additional information or considerations that need to be included in the problem tree.** This is normal, but you should avoid modifying your problem tree to align with the objectives tree you are developing without gathering additional evidence to support the new parts of the problem tree.

For example, in Exercise 2-1 we examined GCF SAP #008, "Extended Community Climate Change Project (ECCCP)" from Bangladesh one of the broader impacts from the core problem was "decreased quality of life." This demonstrates how climate change impacts are contributing to the broader development challenges facing the country. To turn this into a positive effect we hope will be realized as a result of our project, we simply change this statement to "Improved quality of life" (Figure 2).

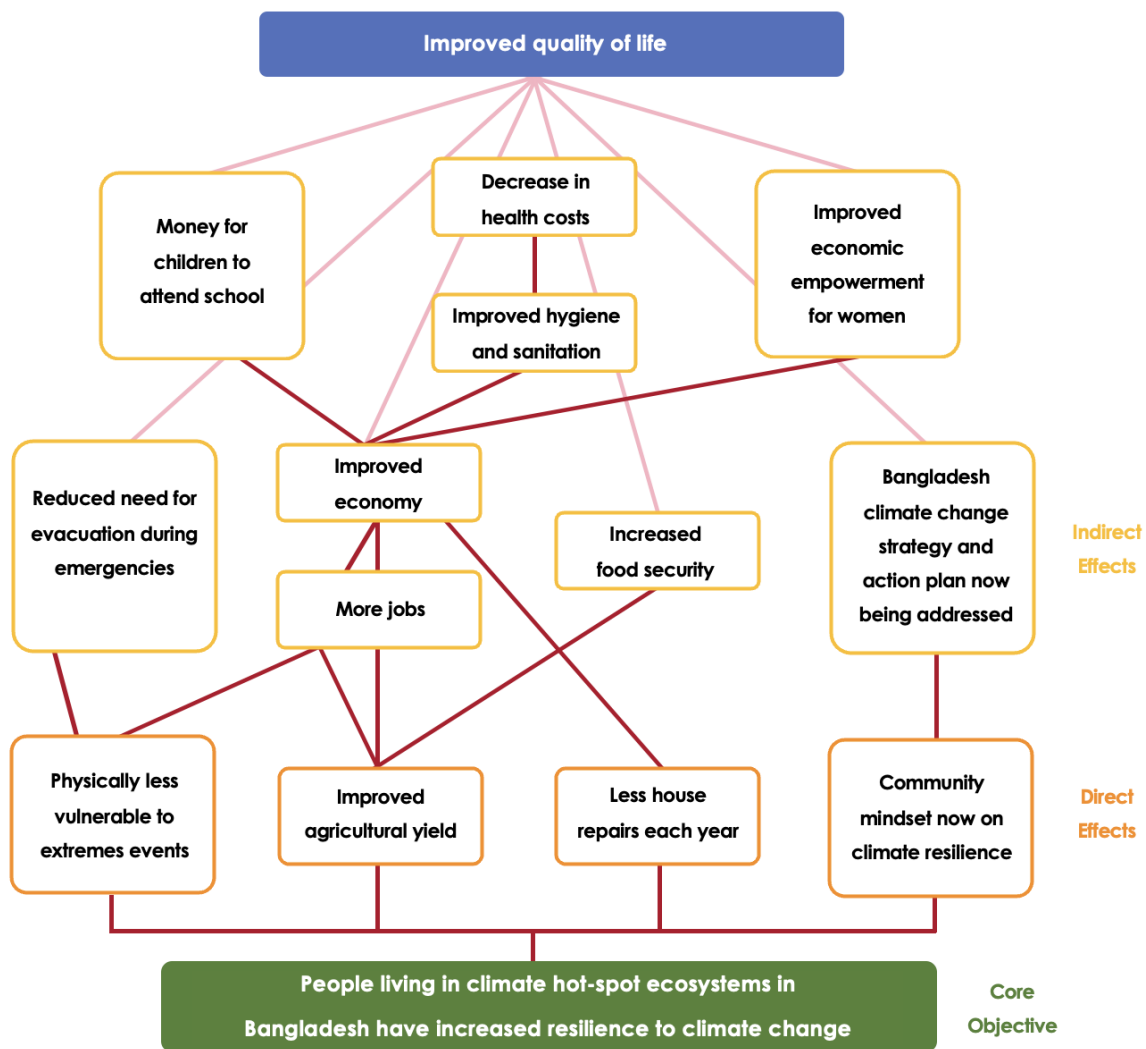


Figure 2: Desired result, direct, and indirect effects in the objective tree. Note that this objective tree mirrors the example problem tree from Exercise 2-1.

Step 3: Identify the Direct Enabling Conditions Contributing to the Desired Result

On the next level below your new desirable conditions statements, rephrase the direct causes of the core problem you have identified into factors that can lead to the desired result. You might need to add new statements if they are necessary to achieve the desired conditions, but make sure that you have a solid **evidence base** for anything that you add.

Step 4: Identify the Indirect Enabling Conditions for the Development Objective

Next, move to what you have determined to be the indirect drivers of the core problem, and rephrase them so that they are now enabling conditions for the development objective (Figure 3). You will find that your objective tree takes much less time to complete than your problem tree. **However, it is equally important to “test the logic” of your objective tree as it is with your problem tree.** As you work through the direct and indirect enabling conditions, reflect upon the causal relationships between the different levels. Make sure that the indirect enabling conditions in the lower levels are sufficient to bring about the direct enabling conditions in the higher levels. You may decide to invite various stakeholders to review the objective tree to make sure that it makes sense.

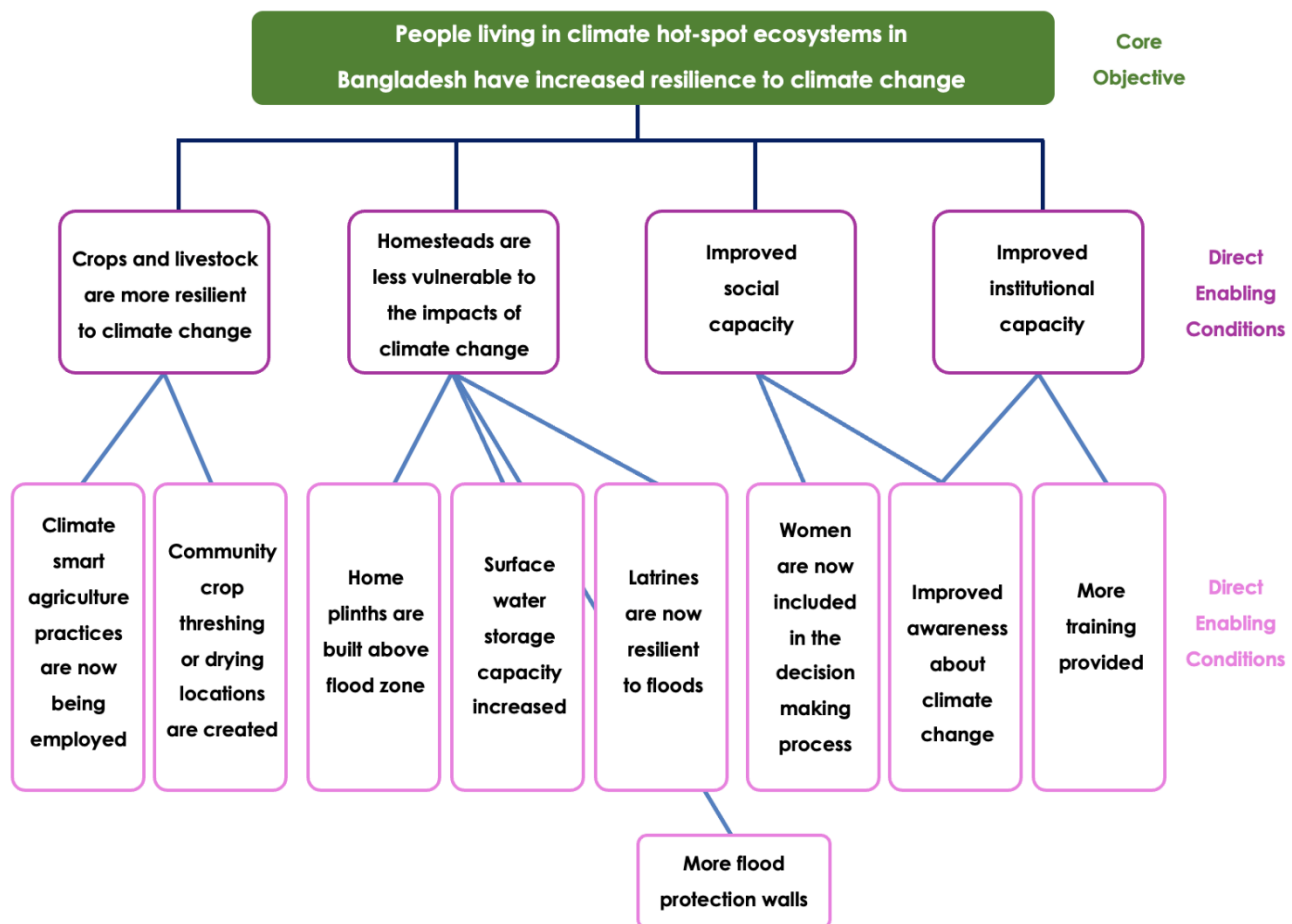


Figure 3: Core objective, direct, and indirect enabling factors in the objective tree.

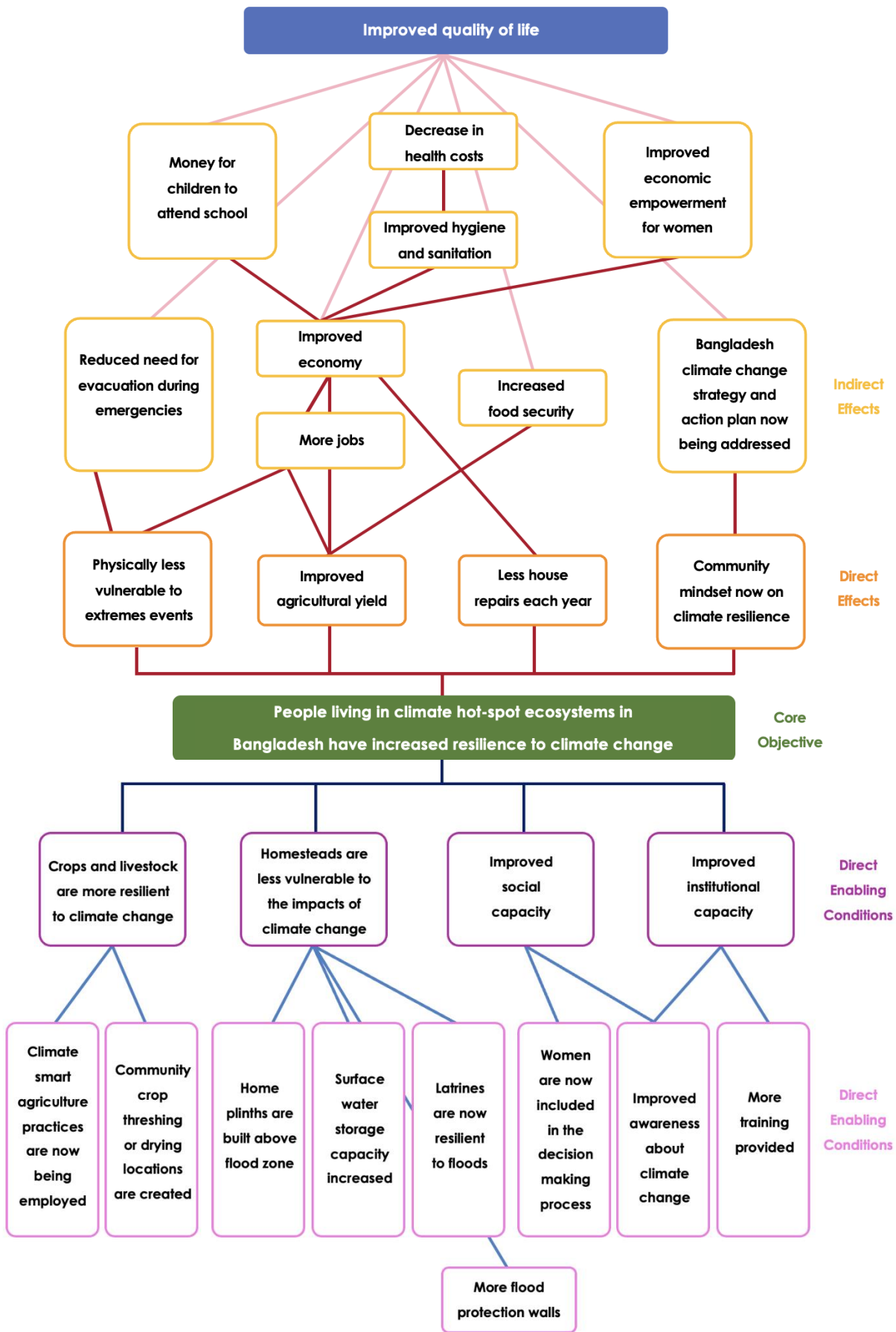


Figure 4: Conceptualized objective tree based on GCF SAP #008 "Extended Community Climate Change Project-Flood (ECCCP-Flood)", approved concept note for Bangladesh.

Tool 4-1: Objective Tree Analysis to Identify the "Ideal State"

The top of your objective tree will also be helpful when describing the expected impacts that your project will potentially have. In Section B.3. of the SAP concept note you will be asked to clearly demonstrate how this project will align with GCF investment criteria and country priorities. The broader impacts from your objective tree will help you address these sections of the template.

B.3.Expected performance against the GCF investment criteria (500 words)²
<i>Please describe and provide an estimate of the expected impacts aligned with the GCF investment criteria: impact potential, paradigm shift, sustainable development, needs of recipients, country ownership, and efficiency and effectiveness.</i>

Figure 5: Section B.3. from the SAP Concept note.

3. Lessons Learned and Conclusion

In this exercise, we have converted your problem tree into an objective tree. Though both the problem tree and objective tree will likely not appear in your finalized concept note, they are essential tools for mapping out the logic that your project is built on. A clear objective tree is extremely useful for informing your **theory of change** as well. As noted above, before moving on, make sure to test the logic of your objective tree by asking “does this make sense?”

In the next exercise, we'll learn how to convert the problem tree and objective tree into a **theory of change** for your concept note.