

The Fishbone Diagram

The fishbone diagram is sometimes called a cause-and-effect diagram. To facilitate the process, follow these steps:

- Agree on a problem or strength statement (effect).
- Write it at the center right of the flipchart. Draw a box around it and draw a horizontal arrow running to it.
- Brainstorm the major categories of causes of the problem/strength. Or use the six factors that influence performance:
 - Organizational systems
 - Incentives
 - Tools and physical environment
 - Skills and knowledge
 - Individual attributes
 - External environment
- Write the categories of causes as branches from the main arrow.
- Brainstorm all the possible causes of the problem/strength. Ask: “Why does this happen?” As each idea is given, the facilitator writes it as a branch from the appropriate category. Causes can be written in several places if they relate to several categories.
- Again ask “why does this happen?” about each cause. Write sub-causes branching off the causes. Continue to ask “Why?” and generate deeper levels of causes. Layers of branches indicate causal relationships.

Using a fishbone diagram to examine the causes of low quality MNCH care

