≈ Asking Questions about DEAR Projects ≈
Suggestions from EU DEAR project organisers, staff, volunteers, participants and funders

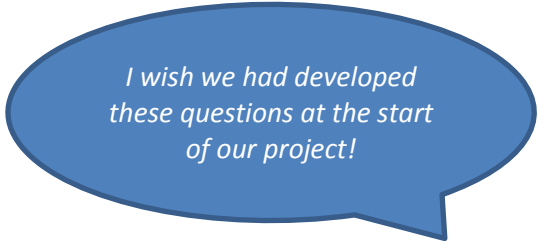### Developing questions about DEAR projects

During 2015 the DEAR Support Team organised and facilitated six workshop-meetings involving:

- more than 60 EU Development Education & Awareness Raising (DEAR) projects,
- more than 125 participants,
- more than 100 organisations, institutions and local authorities from across the European Union.

Staff from the European Commission's DEAR sector also took part in the workshops.

I wish we had developed these questions at the start of our project!

Workshop participant managing a three-year DEAR project that was about to be completed

The issues discussed at the workshops ranged from * dealing with social-economic change, to * engaging 'agents of change' and 'multipliers', to * assessing the effect of projects on attitudes and behaviours of audiences and participants, to * ideas that make the effect of projects longer lasting.

Represented projects used a variety of methodologies, including awareness raising *of* global development, advocacy and campaigning *about* development issues, and education *for* engagement in development.

What all the workshops had in common was a search for key questions that any DEAR project organiser could (or should) usefully consider during **PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION AND CONCLUSION** of their project.[1]

Questions to ask (and answer)

The various questions which workshop participants developed are summarised in the following pages under a number of headings:
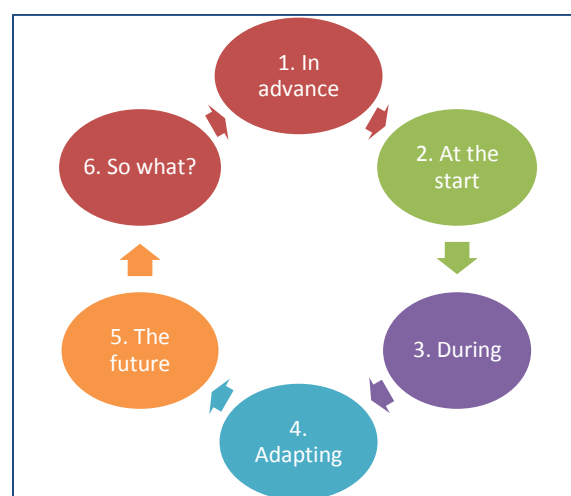

The same questions can often usefully be asked at different stages of the project.

Suggestions:
≈ During the different stages of a project regularly consider the questions shown under ALL of the headings ≈
≈ Make a note of your answers. Use that as a means of learning about how perspectives and experiences change during the project ≈

1. In advance

WHAT CHANGE DO WE WANT FROM WHOM AND WHY?
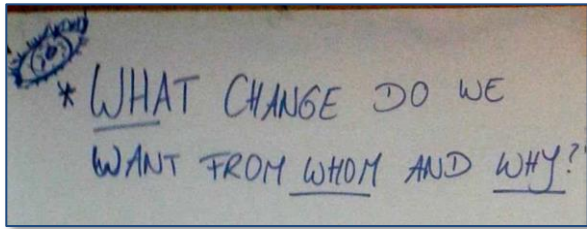
What is the problem or issue the project aims to address?

Why are you (and your partners, audiences/ participants/ targets) well-placed to address this problem or issue?

Is your focus on very **specific change identified by *you***, or is your focus on a **process of change** that helps your audience/ participants/ targets to create change that *they* identify?

How does this focus affect the methods you use?

How do you choose **exactly who to engage** in your project - which partner organisations/ LAs/ communities? - which audiences, participants or targets? - which allies?

How do you know that these are the right ones?

Which **learning points from previous or other projects** do you use?

Which **perspectives on development/ change** do you address in your project?

Are there particular perspectives you do not address? Why not?

2. At the start

Significant time can elapse between submitting a proposal, having the application accepted by the funder, and being able to start a project.

Suggestion:
≈ It is useful to reconsider all the assumptions and plans you had as the first task to carry out in your project (and reserve plenty of time for doing this) – particularly with your partner organisations ≈
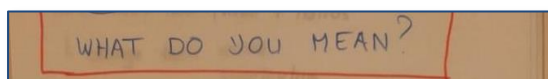
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

What has changed about **the context** in which the project takes place since you developed the project proposal?

For instance, - are the problems/ issues/ opportunities the same? - have the project partners' expectations and needs changed?

What do your **participants/ audiences expect, want and need**? How will the project meet their expectations, wants and needs?

Who are the **project's other stakeholders**? What are their expectations and needs, and how does the project address those?

How does the project relate to/communicate with **negative stakeholders** (i.e. those not in favour of the project or its objectives)?

3. During

Suggestion:
≈ Invest time for learning and re-planning with all your partners: needs, abilities, interests and opportunities are likely to change throughout the time of the project ≈

Qs about what CAs do with their involvement?
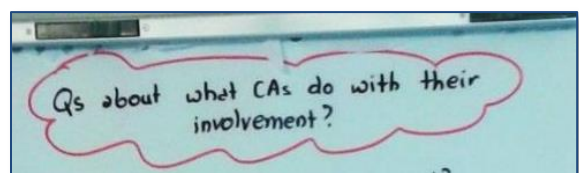
Who is your (external) **'critical friend'**?
How do they help you to monitor, evaluate, learn from what you are doing, and help you to plan the rest of the project (and beyond)?

What is the **practical difference** the project is making? How does it help participants/ targets and others to **multiply the work** of the project?

How do you know you are moving in the right direction? Which methods, databases, and other tools do you use: and do they give you adequate, comparable and complementary information?

How does the project create **friends for the future**?

How will your **project contacts and networks** be supported in the future - and are they aware of that?

4. Adapting

It is more than likely that either at the start or during your project there will be a need to adapt and change your plans.

Suggestion:
≈ In the project plan and timetable reserve time for change and adaptation ≈

How do the **changing circumstances and needs** of project partners/ your audiences/ participants/ targets affect what you can achieve or do?

How flexible are your plans, contacts and contracts with your funder(s): how do they enable you to **change your plans in case of need**?

How does the project take on board **ideas and suggestions** from its audiences/ participants/ critical friend/ evaluator?

5. The future

"A two-year project is a project. A three-year project is a never ending task." [Anonymous]

Suggestion:
≈ In your project plan and during project implementation explicitly address how learning and outcomes from this project will help and give ideas for project partners'/ participants'/ targets' future work ≈

Which planning, monitoring or reporting **templates** are useful to keep for future projects?

How does the project support **self-sustained action by participants/ audiences/ targets** beyond and outside of the project?

How will project outputs, methods/tools and learning remain **accessible post-project**?

6. So what?

Suggestion:
≈ Address and describe what you and other stakeholders consider to be the project's 'success'. Do this at various points during implementation and note how your perspectives change over time – and why ≈
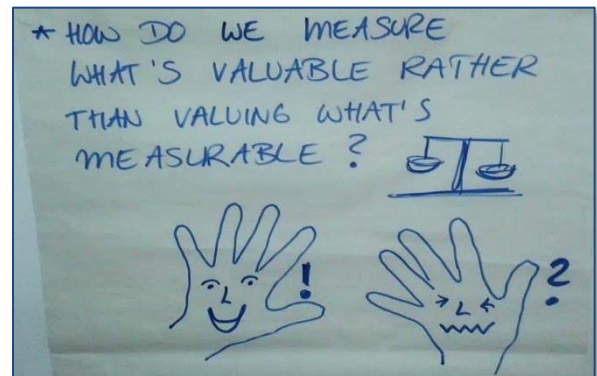
How has **diversity** (of contexts, interests, starting points, etc.) of various stakeholders been addressed (and used) in the project?

How do different stakeholders **define 'success'**?
How successful does each of them think the project is/has been? - and why?

Which **monitoring and evaluation approaches** have been particularly useful in learning from project processes and outcomes?

In what way will the project continue to have **local relevance** (to participants/audiences/targets)?

What have been the **unintended** (positive and negative) **consequences** of the project's processes and outcomes? How will they affect your future plans?
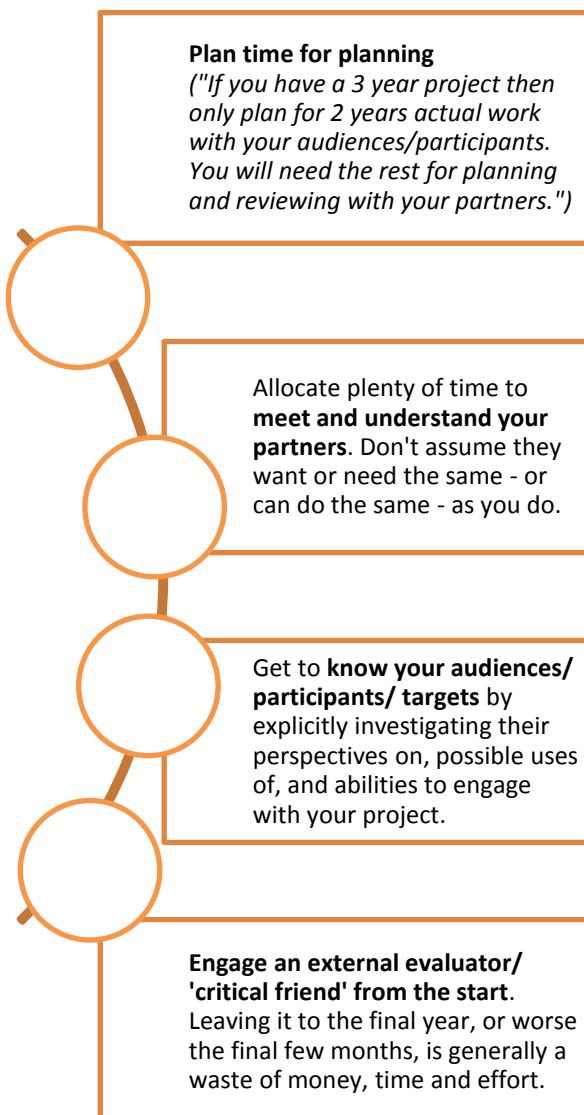
How do you, your partners, participants, audiences, targets **celebrate** what you've done, achieved, and learned?

Other questions to consider

What the questions developed by DEAR projects do is highlight various issues that help project organisations in identifying qualities, processes, and learning at various stages in the project.

However, the questions shown are not the only ones to be asked in planning, implementing or concluding your project. Project management principles, participatory monitoring and evaluation practice, and your funder's requirements should play a key role in ensuring you apply appropriate questions to your work throughout your project.

In reflecting on their experiences four points were mentioned regularly by workshop participants – many wished that they had addressed these from the beginning of their project:

Plan time for planning
("If you have a 3 year project then only plan for 2 years actual work with your audiences/participants. You will need the rest for planning and reviewing with your partners.")

Allocate plenty of time to **meet and understand your partners**. Don't assume they want or need the same - or can do the same - as you do.

Get to **know your audiences/ participants/ targets** by explicitly investigating their perspectives on, possible uses of, and abilities to engage with your project.

Engage an external evaluator/ 'critical friend' from the start. Leaving it to the final year, or worse the final few months, is generally a waste of money, time and effort.

Notes

[1] Details of the different workshops, the issues they discussed and the questions they developed -and answered- can be found at:
- http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/dear-programme/document/cluster-meetings-2015-report (focussed on exploring how sustained, lasting impact can be created and noted)
- http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/dear-programme/document/cm-reading-report (focussed on assessing results of projects on audiences and participants)
- http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/dear-programme/document/cm-prague-2015-report (focussed on engaging, developing and supporting 'change agents' and multipliers)
- http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/dear-programme/document/report-cm-dublin (focussed on engaging people in issues of social-economic change)

European Commission supported **Development Education and Awareness Raising projects** aim to develop European citizens' awareness and critical understanding of the interdependent world and of their role, responsibility and lifestyles in relation to a globalised society; and to support their active engagement in global attempts to eradicate poverty, and promote justice, human rights, and sustainable ways of living.

The **DEAR Support Team** is a project of the European Commission supporting the implementation and development of the DEAR Programme. The project is managed by a consortium of EPRD, LDK, TCIC, Fundación Cultura de Paz and CIDEAL. The Team consists of Harm-Jan Fricke, Sandra Oliveira, Caroline Vilos, Johannes Krause and occasional short-term consultants.

The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of the DEAR Support Team and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.