Learning Questions

What is a learning question?

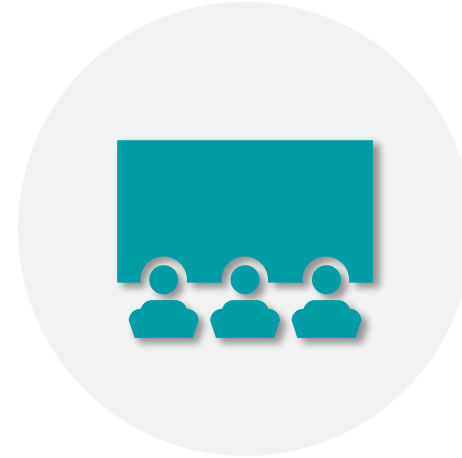**A learning question is what you ask yourself when you want to learn something.**

It is a set of questions that, when answered, will enable us to gain a better understanding of our projects and at the same time, improve our way of working to be more effective.

What is a learning question?

What is the fastest way to boil an egg?

How does the use of theatre encourage learning between organizations, and if it does not encourage learning, how come?

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Why is a learning question important?

Questions are incredibly powerful tools. Questions help us to learn by prompting us to make sense of our own experience, draw on existing knowledge, test assumptions, seek new explanations, make connections, and generate insights.

Addressing following the purposes:

- Seek solutions to problems, and ideas
- Verify /Explore underlying assumptions
- Revise Theory of Change
- Stimulate creativity and innovations
- Identify critical knowledge gaps and improve system thinking

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Learning questions & Theory of Change

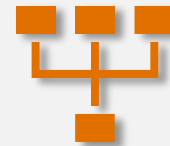Learning questions are closely linked to the Theory of Change

Linked to 'what do we want to achieve?'

Help to focus your learning in order to guide your next actions.

It creates a cycle(s) of probe → review → act

Bring focus to the processes (including struggles and changes) that happen in the project implementation to balance out the disproportionate focus on the outcomes and final products.

YOU must create and answer your learning question(s)

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Good learning questions have the following characteristics

Is this an 'open' question that starts with 'How', 'What', 'Where', 'When' or 'Who'?

Is this question relevant to the real work of the people who will be exploring it?

Will this question help you make better, more informed decisions?

Will this question stimulate fresh or innovative thinking or approaches?

Is this question understandable and clear - not so complex that it is open to widely different interpretations?

Does the question state very clearly what you want to learn?

Does the question avoid hidden assumptions or beliefs?

Will the question encourage new and different questions to be asked as the initial question is explored?

Will the potential benefits arising from answering the question be worth the effort?

It is developed in consultation with those who will be involved in answering the question.

It is a genuine question – a question that is currently unanswered in the given context.

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Learning questions for project on child marriages

Assumption

Child marriages occur because of outdated practices/beliefs.

What are the circumstances/factors that lead parents to allow their daughters to be married at a young age?

Who are the key change makers/influencers within community X?

How does early marriages affect the girls future economic and educational prospects?
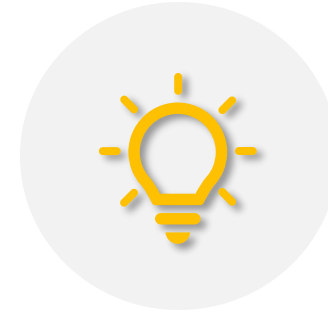
Examples of learning questions

Needs more Work:
Does the mining industry in East Africa improve the lives of communities it is in direct contact with?

Needs more work:
Why do some corporations pollute the water if they aren't regulated?

Better:
In what way does the presence of large scale-miners affect the lives of communities in Kahama district, Shinyanga region.

Better:
How do government regulations prevent corporations from polluting the water?

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Creating your own learning questions

REFLECT

What questions are you asking when it comes to your project advocacy?

EXPLORE

What do you want to learn in order to be better at what you do?

TEST

How can you find answers to your questions? What do you need to be able to produce answers?

SHARE

How do you think you can share your learning? What are the best or most practical platforms for you?

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