

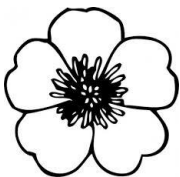
RESEARCH AND EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Research and evaluation questions help narrow a theme into something we can observe and verify. Questions help us judge what data to include or exclude in a study, and give structure to findings. They guide conclusions and recommendations, which should directly respond to them. This one-pager introduces some tips for creating good research questions.



FAIR AND BALANCED

- **Keep it simple** Stick to one or two research questions. Find your priority and assess what you have capacity to include. Then make your questions simple, ideally one line each. Try to avoid 'and' in your question – check whether it means you have two questions hidden in one!
- **Not too broad** A research question is narrower than a research theme or objective. It should help you set limits on what data to collect with the resources you have. A question like 'What is an alternative global economic model?' may well be too broad!
- **Not too narrow** Don't make it too easy, either. You don't want something you can respond with a yes/no answer or a single fact. Research questions are more complex and harder to respond to than *fieldwork* questions, which are answered directly by participants in a questionnaire or interview.
- **Do not assume** Make sure there are no hidden judgements in your question. For example, if you ask 'why do women hate computers?', you are assuming women hate computers to start with!



NEW AND RICH

- **Make it new** Make sure you are not asking something that has already been answered. Your question must build from current data and explore something new. That is why it is essential to examine previous studies, evaluations and work you have done on the topic, as well as asking experts, before you create your question.
- **Make it rich** Sub-questions are subordinate to the main research question. They help you get different perspectives on and enrich your answers to that main question. Aim for two or three sub-questions.



DATA REGULATOR

- **Define key words** Clarifying the key words in your question guides your collection of data. If your question is 'what is the role of faith leaders in girls' age of marriage?' then define what you mean by 'faith leaders' (e.g. are you thinking of Christian and Muslim?) and by 'girls' (e.g. 8-16 years old?). That way, you make it clear that data you are collecting is *within* those parameters.
- **Limit your question in time and space** Your question should help you limit the data you collect – what a relief! So, make sure you clarify the geographical area and time period you want data for.