

Communication and learning hot topics in DEALS expert meeting

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Reformulate and communicate the Theory of Change in a simple way per city, appoint an expert who collects and arranges data across the DEALS cities, and give new impetus to internal learning. Those were some of the suggestions that came up in the DEALS expert meeting of October 22th. The ideas of the experts will be used as input for the 2021 plan.

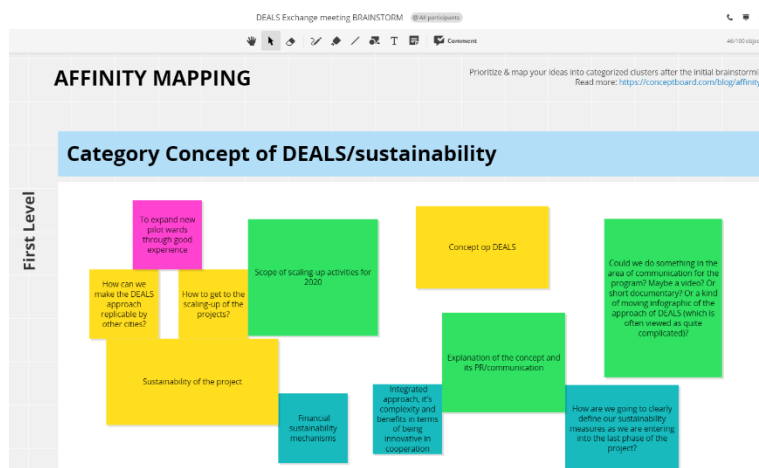
The expert meeting was held online, with participants in as far as Pereira (Colombia) and Patheingyi (Myanmar). For some of them it was early in the evening, others had just risen from their bed and were accompanied by an impressive bird concert.

Irene Oostveen, programme manager of DEALS, said that the main goal of the meeting was to gather ideas for the 2021 plan, with special attention for Covid-19. She had a relaxed brainstorm in mind, using an interactive online board which allows for structuring, rearranging and synthesizing ideas.

Simple and stupid

The meeting started with the determining of the themes to be discussed. The experts selected the concept of DEALS, the monitoring of the programme, the handling of Covid-19, the role of the city focal person, and the need for technical assistance. Sub groups were formed, each one concentrating on one of the themes. Irene invited them to not only come up with ideas, but also pick the best ones out and present them to the other participants. 'And if there are any conflicts of interest, we have some city focal persons on board who know how to deal with that', she said jokingly.

With regard to the first theme, the concept of DEALS, the importance of sustainability, scaling up and the understanding of the concept were stressed. Myrte said that even some experts don't understand the Theory of Change (TOC) underlying the programme. According to Robert, the TOC should have been made in a participatory way. Since this hasn't

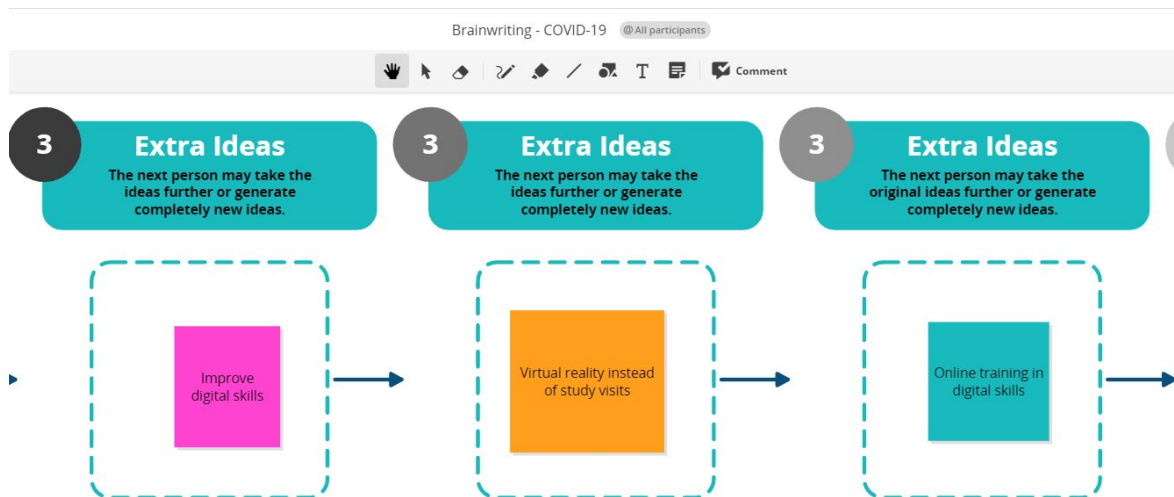


been done with all now involved, the TOC should be reformulated per city, following the principle of KISS (keep it simple and stupid). Peter emphasized the importance of the sustainability of the programme: it shouldn't stop once the funding stops. He considered this a crucial issue, that would be worth a special meeting. Irene responded that the importance of financial sustainability was particularly mentioned in the mid-term review that has been carried out last summer and is now being completed.

Ways of handling the pandemic

The sub group responsible for the monitoring of the programme underlined that the indicators of the programme should be revisited and standardized. A major question is: are they still relevant? Anke pledged for a better gathering of data. A monitoring and evaluation expert should be hired to collect and arrange data across the DEALS cities. Peter suggested an inquiry to determine the successes and their causes, and the gathering of stories of change. Irene agreed that this can help to better understand the functioning and effects of DEALS.

The ideas concerning Covid-19 concentrated on replacing live events by online means. Online trainings in digital skills should be offered to city focal persons and other stakeholders, and online presentations of the goals and outcomes of DEALS to government staff. Radio and internet could be used to communicate with the urban poor about these topics. Another suggestion was to help the urban poor by providing direct cash to them. Peter came up with the idea to exchange information on the various ways in which the DEALS cities are handling the Covid-19 pandemic.



Extra grants

With regard to the city focal persons, the importance of providing them with additional expertise and skills was emphasized. This could be done by online master classes and regular video calls with the programme staff, among others. Felipe, the city focal person in Pereira, said he needed standards: what is expected exactly from a city focal person? Others stressed the need for additional technical and digital skills and a uniform appreciation of the work of the city focal person.

The last sub theme, technical assistance, was intertwined with internal learning. In the first stage of the programme, live meetings for internal learning were organized. Some of the participants missed them very much. Online thematic learning sessions per semester could replace them. Another idea was to organize an internal learning session once all mid-term reviews have been completed. At the time of the meeting, the ones about Beira and Manila were still in progress. Final suggestions were to decide on key topics of the programme and yearly report on them and to develop procedures for the cities to apply for extra grants.

Irene invited the participants to further explore the sub themes after the meeting, using the digital board for it. In the end, all ideas will be collected and serve as input for the 2021 plan.

The DEALS experts

Tessa van Laarhoven (Beira), Peter van Tongeren (Beira), Nicole Ward-Boot (Beira), Robert Meerman (Sèmè-Podji), Anke Tjoelker (Sèmè-Podji), Daan Stelder (Kumasi), Veronica Hitosis (Manila), Jarik Stollenga (Manila), Htee Ku Naw (Pathein), Myrthe van der Spek (Pathein), Felipe Vasquez (Pereira).