

# COVID-19

## LEARNING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

### MAY 2020



# COVID-19 LNA Analysis

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## SETTING THE SCENE

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected communities all over the world with devastating impacts on individuals and communities worldwide. International aid organisations are also heavily impacted by the situation. The pandemic presents unprecedented challenges, and as a sector we need to have an accurate understanding of staff's capacity needs in order to support effective programme implementation. Initiatives in the sector have and continue to assess the situation from an organisational and individual perspective to inform responses and programmes. This report is based on a Learning Needs Assessment (LNA) carried out by RedR UK on the organisational challenges and staff learning needs in the wake of COVID-19. There were 83 respondents from 45 humanitarian and development organisations globally, including INGOs, NGOs, faith-based organisations, UN agencies, clusters, and governmental bodies.

This report outlines findings from the RedR UK LNA and sectoral surveys and assessments on the challenges organisations are facing within the context of COVID-19. Based on this, capacity building needs and solutions are outlined, as well as next steps and recommendations.

## MAIN FINDINGS

1. **Shifting programme priorities:** COVID-19 has led to a suspension of programmes or a shift in focus to COVID-19 programming across the sector. As a result, respondents are having to undertake more remote management and delivery of programmes. Much interest has arisen around COVID-19 related programmes, while at the same time as organisations are making great efforts to keep existing programming going.
2. **New ways of working:** Staff or organisations are working from home, forced to consider alternative ways of service delivery and management and have been moved between projects.
3. **COVID-19 specific content:** Organisations mainly seek training on COVID-19 specific topics, as well as Safety & Security, Management & Leadership, and Needs Assessment. Non-COVID-19 topics are requested with a COVID-19 perspective (e.g. project management during COVID-19).
4. **Shared priorities across language groups:** The prioritisation of topics is similar across language groups, meaning that the same courses and resources could be developed and then translated, and still hold relevance. Exchange of learning and best practices between contexts would also seem to hold value.
5. **Organisation specific needs:** All organisations state COVID-19 topics as the top priority, however priorities beyond this shift significantly based on type of organisation. Faith-based organisations identify Coordination and Protection as highly prioritized topics while for INGOs Proposal and Report Writing is important, and for NGOs Training of Trainers was more significant.

6. **Interactive digital learning:** There is a clear trend of pre-recorded webinars not being a preference, both when looking at language disaggregated responses and all responses for the LNA. Context considerations is key however, as some comments indicate that pre-recorded webinars are in fact more important, as they would be more accessible if they require low bandwidth and are downloadable.

## METHODOLOGY

The LNA was shared with the international aid community through email and remained open for approximately 3 weeks. A total of 83 responses were collected, from 45 different organisations. These responses were analysed through the lens of three main questions:

- What challenges do organisations face in the context of COVID-19?
- What learning do organisations need, both in terms of content and methods?
- What patterns of learning needs can be seen in terms of:
  - Language
  - Type of organisation

Conclusions from additional studies from the humanitarian sector and the impact of COVID-19 were then coupled with the conclusions from the RedR UK analysis, and this formed the foundation for the analysis.

## RESPONDENTS

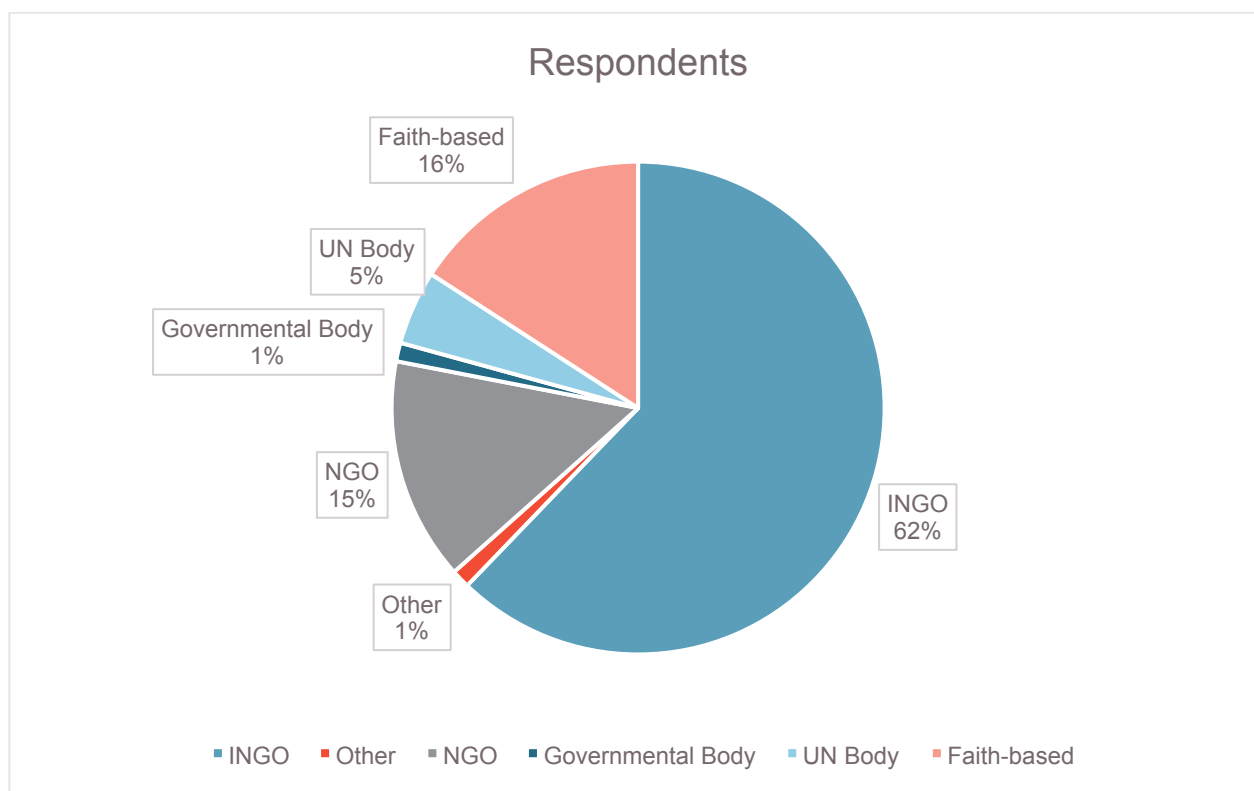


Figure 1. Respondents of LNA

## FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

### ORGANISATIONAL CHALLENGES

This section outlines the findings on organisational challenges, including staffing, from the RedR UK LNA as well as findings of a sectoral analysis. The implications for capacity building are then presented.

### ORGANISATIONAL IMPACT

#### REDR UK LNA FINDINGS

Most respondents report that COVID-19 has impacted their ability to deliver programming, their staff's mental well-being, and their financial situation.

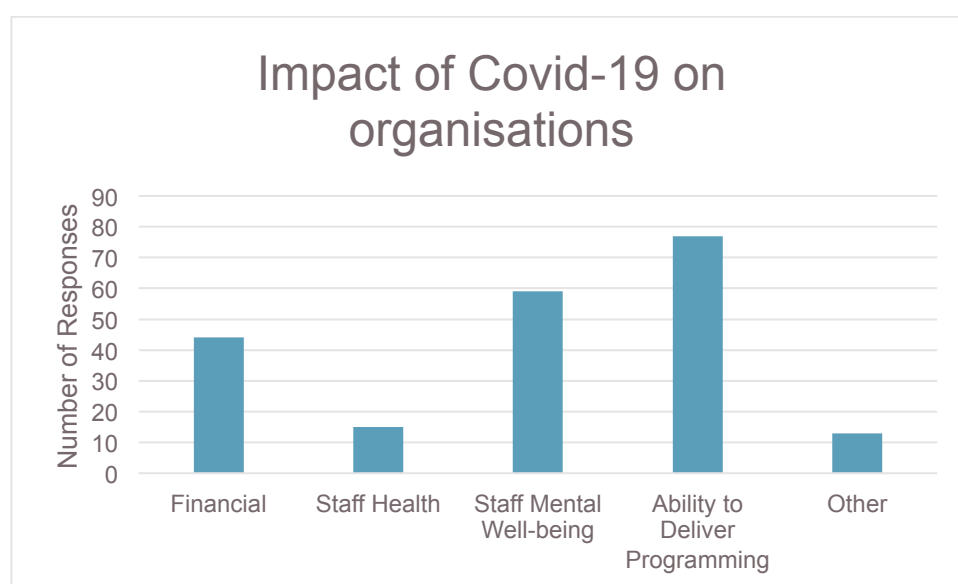


Figure 2. COVID-19 Impact on Organisations

Beyond this, respondents also report the following impact of COVID-19:

- Partner organisations have been negatively impacted
- Organisations' ability to deliver programming has been reduced due to restrictions in movement
- Staff's safety and security are compromised through lack of available personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Communities in programmes are resisting assistance due to fear
- Stigma towards individuals affected by COVID-19

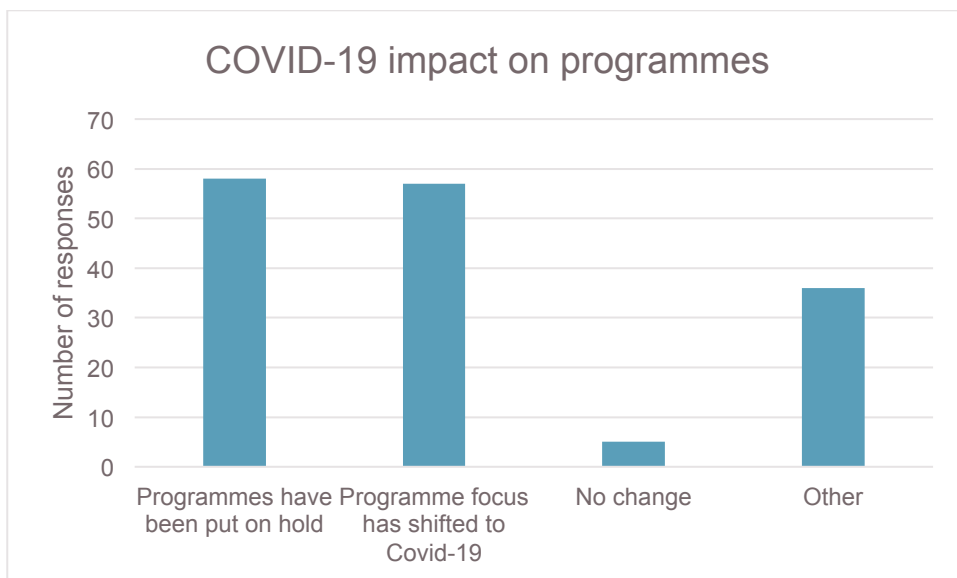


Figure 3. COVID-19 Impact on Programmes

A vast majority of respondents have experienced disruption to programmes as a result of COVID-19, either through programmes having been put on hold or because programme focus has been shifted to COVID-19. Several additional comments stated that programmes have been altered to remote working, management, or delivery.

*“Changes in activities that require field work, such as home visits and follow-up visits, coordination with other organizations, and the effort to adopt new activities related to spreading awareness and following up on other services available to beneficiaries, trying to find alternatives that guarantee the safe transfer of cash assistance and delivery to beneficiaries in a safe manner.”*

Organisations are having to adapt their means of delivery as COVID-19 is redrawing the landscape in which they operate. There were several other comments on how regular programming has been impacted and put on hold, with less donor interest for non-COVID-19 related topics.

*“Significant increase in effort required to continue any regular programming activity. Loss of donor interest in anything that doesn't include Covid.”*

Simultaneously, other comments indicate that pre-existing work still goes on and is of great importance.

*“...community support projects' focus shifted to local response to COVID-19 but many remained unchanged and focused on food security, livelihoods and improving basic services”*



It is clear that an overwhelming majority of respondents in this LNA have been directly impacted by COVID-19, through either suspension of, or a shift in, activities, or through challenges in keeping existing operations going. The comments made on how pre-existing programming is impacted highlights the importance for the sector not to lose sight of ongoing, pre-existing humanitarian work. It is key that new interventions support or at the very least do not undermine work which took place before the pandemic.

## SECTORAL FINDINGS

The impact of COVID-19 on organisations' programming can be found in several sources. Firstly, ACAPS states that a large majority of their Humanitarian Expert Network (HEN) members in Africa, MENA, Asia and Oceania, and the Americas have shut some or most programmes and near half of members have interrupted programming in Europe<sup>1</sup>. Very few HEN members in Africa, MENA, and Asia and Oceania have shut all programmes. No programmes in Europe or the Americas have been shut down. The Institute of Fundraising reports that 52% of charities have reduced existing or previous levels of service<sup>2</sup> and BOND reports that 86% of their members responding in a survey are cutting back or considering cutting back their in-country programmes<sup>3</sup>.

The balance of pre-existing programming and COVID-19 programming is also a concern of HEN members from Africa who expressed worry that funding will be impacted, as COVID-19 diverts the focus of governments and donors<sup>4</sup>, implying that funding for pre-existing programmes will take a backseat for a period of time though the need for the programmes remains. The balancing act between responding to COVID-19 and maintaining pre-existing programmes was further brought up in the New Humanitarian's online conversation "Behind the headlines: How will COVID-19 impact crisis zones?", where participants discussed how to keep existing programmes going whilst transitioning to COVID-19 programming. The importance of not creating parallel systems was emphasised and the value of "layering" additional elements into already existing programmes was raised<sup>5</sup>.

Striking the balance between these could be done through strong anchoring in local partnership or delivering directly through local partners. The fact that local actors are reporting on the challenge between pre-existing programmes and COVID-19 responses shows how dependent the sector is on local actors, and hence that there needs to be a real effort made in supporting their capacity.

Flexibility from donors is also especially important, something which has been echoed by several sources. Suze van Meegen, Advocacy Manager at the Norwegian

<sup>1</sup>[https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/200420\\_acaps\\_humanitarian\\_experts\\_network\\_survey\\_2\\_results\\_final.p](https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/200420_acaps_humanitarian_experts_network_survey_2_results_final.pdf)

<sup>2</sup><https://www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk/news/coronavirus-impact-survey-results-charities-cannot-meet-the/>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.bond.org.uk/news/2020/04/how-is-COVID-19-affecting-ngos-finances-and-operations>

<sup>4</sup>[https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/200420\\_acaps\\_humanitarian\\_experts\\_network\\_survey\\_2\\_results\\_final.p](https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/200420_acaps_humanitarian_experts_network_survey_2_results_final.pdf)

<sup>5</sup><https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2020/03/26/coronavirus-international-aid>

Refugee Council in Somalia, attending the New Humanitarian online conversation, stated that donor countries need to give organisations space to understand needs<sup>6</sup>. BOND has also reported on both the importance of flexible donors and actions already taken, such as relaxing deadlines and requirements, allowing for adjustment of activities and adopting a case-by-case approach to partners<sup>7</sup>. The World Economic Forum have identified flexibility from donors in this endeavour as important:

*With the changed context of the COVID-19 pandemic, our programmes need to pivot rapidly to respond to different and additional needs, while coping with restrictions on travel, lockdown requirements and health concerns. This requires a massive amount of flexibility, as the parameters and cost structures of our work shift, with the duration of these shifts entirely unknown.<sup>8</sup>*

## STAFFING

### REDR UK LNA

When it comes to staffing, respondents state the following impact:

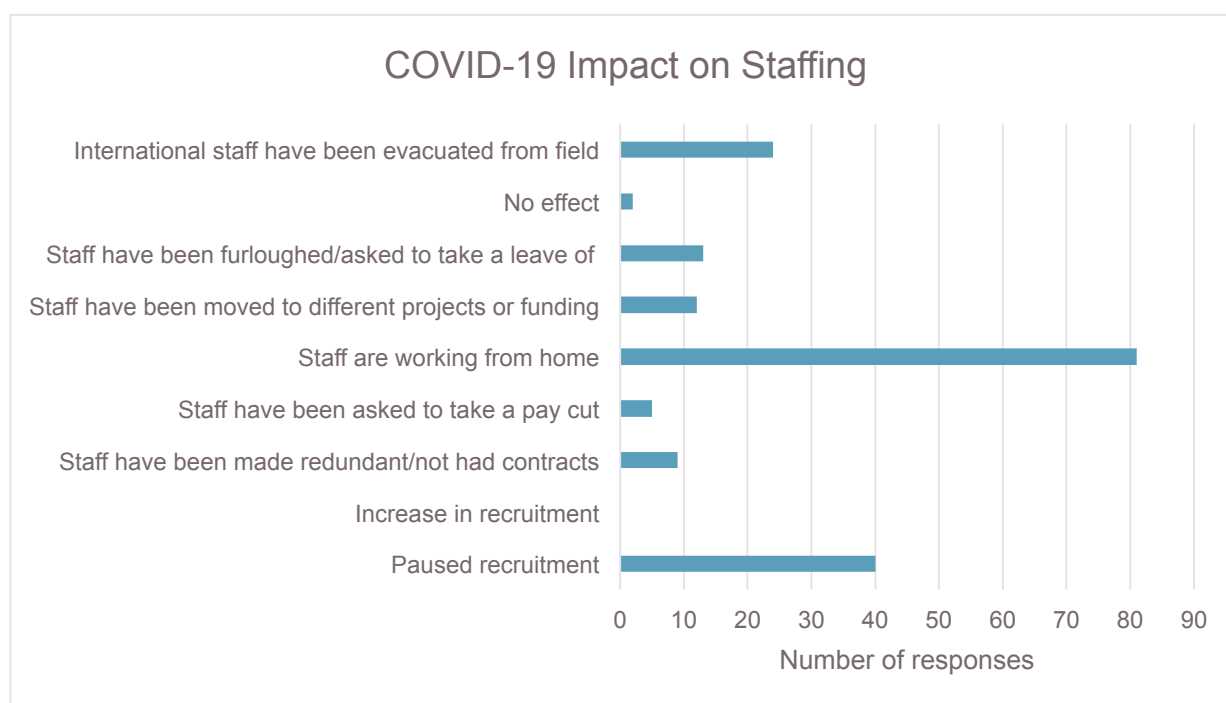


Figure 4. COVID-19 Impact on Staffing

Shifting to working from home is the largest change seen by organisations, with a near 100% impact rate. Recruitment has been paused for the majority, and no one has seen an increase in hiring. A small proportion of staff have been asked to take a pay cut or been furloughed. An equally small proportion have been relocated to

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2020/03/26/coronavirus-international-aid>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.bond.org.uk/news/2020/04/4-ways-funders-are-supporting-ngos-and-responding-to-coronavirus>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/how-to-reform-ngo-funding-so-we-can-deal-with-threats-like-COVID-19/>

different projects. Further comments from respondents highlight that staff are facing health concerns and as a result require unique training on this topic.

The number of responses on how many members of staff have been moved to different projects is only 12 (14% of responses) yet nearly 70% of respondents state that their programme focus has shifted to COVID-19 or that their programmes have been put on hold. This could mean that many staff are working on managing the adaptation to new ways of working, but do not yet have a clear project within which they work, as we would otherwise expect to see high numbers of staff already in new projects. This is possibly due to a slow response from donors to the COVID-19 emergency, or the fact that organisations are in the very early phases of responding and still have not established new structures and processes.

Almost a third of respondents stated that international staff have been evacuated from field offices. Where evacuation has taken place, this has implications on remaining staff, where over half of respondents state that these staff will require additional operational support, resources, and capacity building.

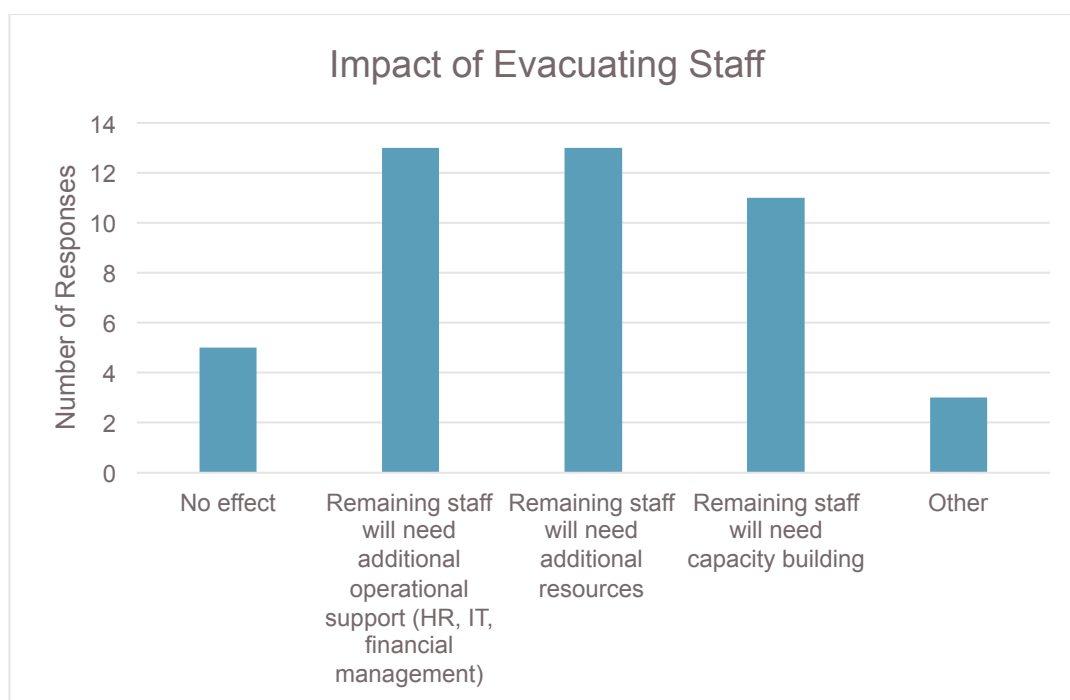


Figure 5. Impact of Evacuating Staff

These findings imply that the capacity building needs shift when staff are evacuated and shows that the design of learning interventions should take the level of evacuated staff into account. It cannot be assumed that teams and organisational make-ups look the same as before Covid-19.

Ways of working have changed, and staff are finding themselves in a rapidly evolving period of adjustment. The responses imply that capacity building needs relate to both ways of working (remotely) and the content of projects (due to the shift in programme focus) and that learning interventions need to carefully consider what

the current make-up of teams are as opposed to assuming they are the same as pre-COVID-19.

## SECTORAL FINDINGS

According to ACAPS' HEN members, most humanitarian and development staff are working from home in Africa and the MENA region<sup>9</sup>. Through a survey on the impact of COVID-19 prevention measures on humanitarian operations for the protection sector in Syria, it was found that most agencies have had to transition to new modalities of work, such as staff rotation and teleworking<sup>10</sup>.

Beyond a shift in working modalities, the wider sector has experienced seen that staff's terms of employment are being affected. BOND reports a significant cut in staff in the NGO sector, including furloughs, compulsory paid leave, putting staff on part-time hours, and making staff redundant, with 60% of NGOs already having cut back on staff and another 25% being likely to do so soon<sup>11</sup>. ACAPS' HEN members in the MENA region, the Americas, and Asia and Oceania reported hiring freezes<sup>12</sup>. BOND has found that most organisations in their survey on financial and operational impact will only remain financially stable for the next three months, after which period the financial situation is uncertain<sup>13</sup>.

This is an interesting divergence with the findings of RedR UK's LNA, where very few organisations reported furloughs or other ways of reducing salary costs but did comment on financial stability being impacted as well as hiring freezes. It is possible that respondents of the BOND survey, mainly CEOs, have a greater overview of organisations and patterns in staffing than programme staff who were the main respondents of the RedR UK LNA, however there is not enough data to confirm.

Despite the differences, the findings of this section do illustrate the need for organisations to have to adapt quickly to changing circumstances. As one way of managing these financial challenges, the World Economic Forum calls for a "new, innovative humanitarian financing model" to meet these financial challenges<sup>14</sup>. This means that we can anticipate capacity building within financial topics in order for aid workers to be able to manage financial issues including budgeting, shifting of allocation of costs, and financial reporting. Furthermore, if new financial models are required in the international aid sector, it would be beneficial for aid workers to be involved in the design of this, something for which further capacity is needed. The backdrop of these financial challenges, however, also highlights a danger that in a period where capacity building is needed and crucial, there are few resources to

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/200420\\_acaps\\_humanitarian\\_experts\\_network\\_survey\\_2\\_results\\_final.pdf](https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/200420_acaps_humanitarian_experts_network_survey_2_results_final.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Impact%20of%20COVID%2019%20prevention%20measures%20on%20humanitarian%20operations%20for%20protection%20sector.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.bond.org.uk/news/2020/04/how-is-COVID-19-affecting-ngos-finances-and-operations>

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/200420\\_acaps\\_humanitarian\\_experts\\_network\\_survey\\_2\\_results\\_final.pdf](https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/200420_acaps_humanitarian_experts_network_survey_2_results_final.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.bond.org.uk/news/2020/04/how-is-COVID-19-affecting-ngos-finances-and-operations>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/how-to-reform-ngo-funding-so-we-can-deal-with-threats-like-COVID-19/>

invest in this. This could be true both within organisations when it comes to capacity building of staff, and in the sector as a whole when it comes to capacity building of local actors.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR CAPACITY BUILDING

Based on the findings above, certain conclusions can be drawn regarding post-COVID-19 capacity building needs in the international aid sector. Some of the issues identified through the LNA are external and cannot be addressed through capacity building measures, however others lend themselves to the following solutions and opportunities:



**Training** pertains to face-to-face, online, or blended learning which aims to train participants on specific topics. **Workshops** refer to sessions where individuals come together to create shared solutions in a creative way. This is a facilitated process rather than training with specific content. **Peer to peer** solutions are those which take place on an interpersonal level, such as mentoring or coaching.

The proposals below are samples of what could meet the challenges identified in the previous section and should not be considered an exhaustive list. Note that some issues could lend themselves to training of target populations and communities directly, however the focus here is on the capacity needs of aid workers.

Issues Identified	Training Topic	Peer to Peer Interventions	Workshop	Justification
<b>Staff Mental Well-Being</b>	Management skills			Training for managers on how to support the mental well-being of their staff.
	Mental health for aid workers			Training for aid workers on managing their own mental health and understanding trigger points and warning signs of fatigue, burn-out, and similar conditions
		Co-counselling		A method whereby aid workers can set up peer to peer counselling relationships to support each other.
<b>Financial Challenges</b>	Proposal and Report Writing			Training to strengthen capacity on writing proposals and reports, in order for organisations to gain more funding opportunities.
	Financial Management			Training to enhance financial management capacity, including budgeting.
			Financial models, systems or tools Hackathon	A co-creative workshop to troubleshoot financial challenges in the sector and design possible models for the future.
<b>Negative Impact on Partner Organisations</b> <sup>15</sup>	Training of Trainers			Training to support inter-organisation capacity building on specific topics of expertise.
		Mentoring and coaching schemes		Schemes to enable inter-personal support on specific topics and professional development of aid workers.
<b>Communities Resisting Assistance due to fear</b>	COVID-19 information			Training of aid workers on key COVID-19 information, and how to share this with target populations in effective ways to ensure they do not resist assistance out of fear.
	Countering rumours and misinformation regarding			Training of aid workers on how to tackle rumours and misinformation regarding COVID-19 to prevent fear

<sup>15</sup> Respondent did not list what specific challenges partner organisations face, and therefore we cannot draw conclusions regarding specific capacity building needs. A further LNA could support in this.

	COVID-19			based on false information.
			Community building workshop	A workshop to build community trust between different communities and between communities aid workers themselves.
<b>Stigma of COVID-19 Victims</b>	COVID-19 information			Training of aid workers on key COVID-19 information, and how to share this with target populations in effective ways to ensure individuals do not stigmatise based on false information.
	Mainstreaming of norm criticism or similar approaches			All interventions which aim to train aid workers in how to work with communities should include a norm-critical or similar approach. This is to enable participants to make power structures visible and hold discussions around these to prevent them from contributing to further stigmatisation of vulnerable groups.
			Community building workshop	A workshop to build trust between different communities
<b>Programme Shift to COVID-19</b>	Project cycle management			Training to support aid workers in managing new projects and programmes as effectively as possible.
<b>Projects delivered remotely</b>	Remote management, delivery and working			Training to build capacity of staff on remote modes of management, delivery of projects, and ways of working.
			Remote working workshop	Organisation specific workshops to create solutions and innovative ways of working remotely within the organisation.
<b>Focus and funding reduced for pre-existing programmes</b>	Fundraising skills			Training to address new post-COVID-19 sector realities, which could take a variety of different forms.
	Maintaining humanitarian standards			

	“Layering” programming			
	Adaptive programming			
	Programming on a shoestring			

Figure 6. Capacity Building Solutions

## ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING NEEDS

### TOPICS

#### REDR UK LNA

The graph below outlines the prioritisation for topics based on the LNA results.

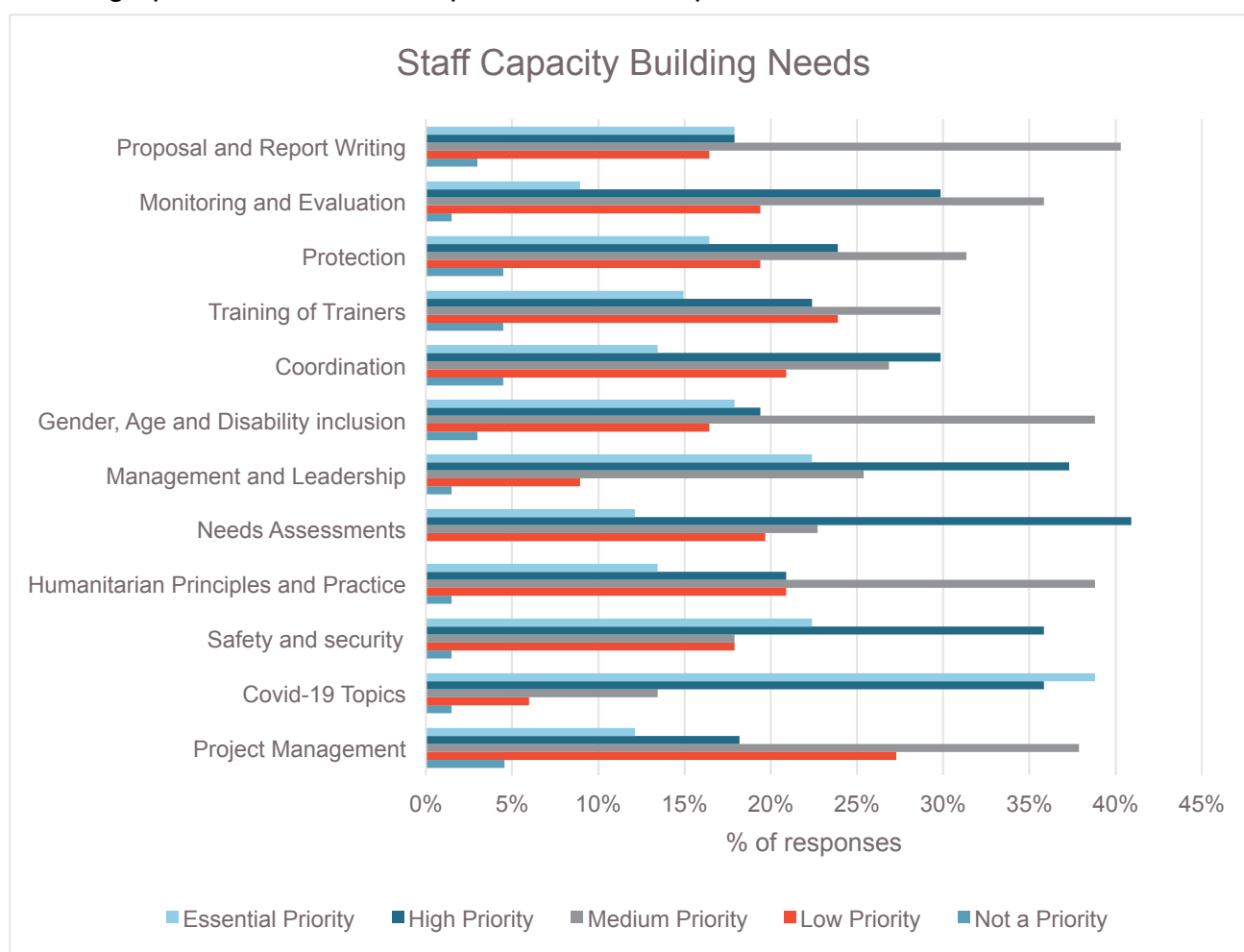


Figure 7. Staff Capacity Building Needs

The most prioritised topics (topics that are listed as high priority and essential) for capacity building are COVID-19 topics, Management and Leadership, Safety and Security, and Needs Assessment. COVID-19 topics were defined in the LNA as hygiene promotion in communities, myths and facts about COVID-19, remote working during lockdowns, community engagement during epidemics, and business continuity planning. It is likely that these topics speak to some of the main



organisational challenges identified above as there are increased demands on managers and leadership, staff are concerned for their safety and security in light of the pandemic, and skills in needs assessment contributes to understanding the ever-changing effects of the pandemic.

Comments in the LNA expanded on specific needs within Management and Leadership, indicating that training on managing people is of equal importance to managing programmatic aspects.

*“I believe also managers should take compassionate/ caring training in order to know how to deal with staff during these tough times. As people feel afraid, insecure and threaten. So you need to teach managers how to speak in a way that is calming/ comforting to staff not the other way.”*

Furthermore, comments pointed to the fact that training topics would need to be COVID-19 mainstreamed.

*“the above [ed note: listed topics in LNA] will need to be adjusted to the current situation, e.g. MEAL or assessment in the time of Covid (new technologies, collecting data and monitoring with no contact to beneficiaries etc.)*

*“something that would help us make effective use of information technology in all the above (i.e. how to remotely manage, coordinate, monitor and evaluate, etc)”*

This seems to represent a need for innovative and creative use of existing tools to manage the adaptation of projects and programmes. Other topics requested highlighted donor rules and regulations as key.

*“Donor rules and regulations for USAID and other...UN Pooled Funds (effective mobilization strategies).”*

Aid workers are clearly being faced with the challenge of adapting to a changing situation and are looking for tools to manage this effectively. An overwhelming majority of respondents listed management, safety and security, needs assessment, and COVID-19 specific content as areas of need. New training in all areas through a COVID-19 lens is requested, implying that generic courses developed prior to COVID-19 would now not meet trainees’ perceived needs. The main topics in this section also align largely with capacity building opportunities identified based on the organisational challenges above.

## SECTORAL FINDINGS

The data on learning needs for organisations in the wake of COVID-19 relate mainly to COVID-19 specific topics, as well as coordination and IT tools. Several sources list COVID-19 specific topics as key learning needs, including the Protection Cluster who identified that training on preventative measures for COVID-19 are a need for partners in Syria<sup>16</sup>. Connected to this, HEN members in an ACAPS survey from South Sudan and Nepal report that there is a general lack of awareness among the public on COVID-19, indicating training needs in this area also. More specifically, HEN members in Bangladesh report that misconceptions among Rohingya populations are leading to individuals not revealing symptoms for fear of being killed<sup>17</sup>. As seen in the section on organisational challenges above, stigmatisation is something that was raised by respondents in the RedR UK LNA as well. These findings tell about the context aid workers operate in, and indicate that capacity needs exist around the ability to disseminate information to target populations and that trainings conducted addressing COVID-19 should tackle stereotyping and discrimination against vulnerable populations in any context.

This could also indicate that there is a need for Trainings of Trainers (ToT) to allow staff and organisations in the field to deliver trainings themselves to communities. Out of the responses in the RedR UK LNA, ToT was the fourth most popular topic, something which would underpin the idea that this is an important topic for staff in the sector. Prior to application of this, more information would be needed on what specific capacity gaps exist in local contexts, which ToTs could support in addressing. Once the need is established in local contexts, capacity on this should be assessed and the suitability of a ToT could be determined.

Coordination also comes up as a strong theme when looking at available sources on learning needs. HEN members from the Americas, Africa, and Asia and Oceania all made comments regarding coordination. These included the need for more information on who is doing what, stronger platforms for guidance and coordination, transparent data sharing as well as clearer guidelines to support the COVID-19 response, and clearer information on the current situation, response, and beneficiaries reached<sup>18</sup>. 43% of all respondents in the RedR UK LNA ranked Coordination as high priority or essential, indicating a possible need for coordination training. As all sectors of society are affected, the scope of responses will likely remain high.

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<sup>16</sup><https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Impact%20of%20COVID%2019%20prevention%20measures%20on%20humanitarian%20operations%20for%20protection%20sector.pdf>

<sup>17</sup>[https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/200420\\_acaps\\_humanitarian\\_experts\\_network\\_survey\\_2\\_results\\_final.pdf](https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/200420_acaps_humanitarian_experts_network_survey_2_results_final.pdf)

<sup>18</sup>[https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/200420\\_acaps\\_humanitarian\\_experts\\_network\\_survey\\_2\\_results\\_final.pdf](https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/200420_acaps_humanitarian_experts_network_survey_2_results_final.pdf)

There are existing efforts which apply a COVID-19 lens on topics, for example M&E by cartONG<sup>19</sup> and FHI 360<sup>20</sup>, Sphere on applying humanitarian standards to fight COVID-19, and the CaLP network on Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) in COVID-19<sup>21</sup>. This shows that learning providers are already amending course content to address this need.

## TYPE OF DIGITAL LEARNING

### REDR UK LNA FINDINGS

There is no strong preference for learning modality, however facilitated online courses and live webinars are slightly favoured when looking at the total numbers of responses.

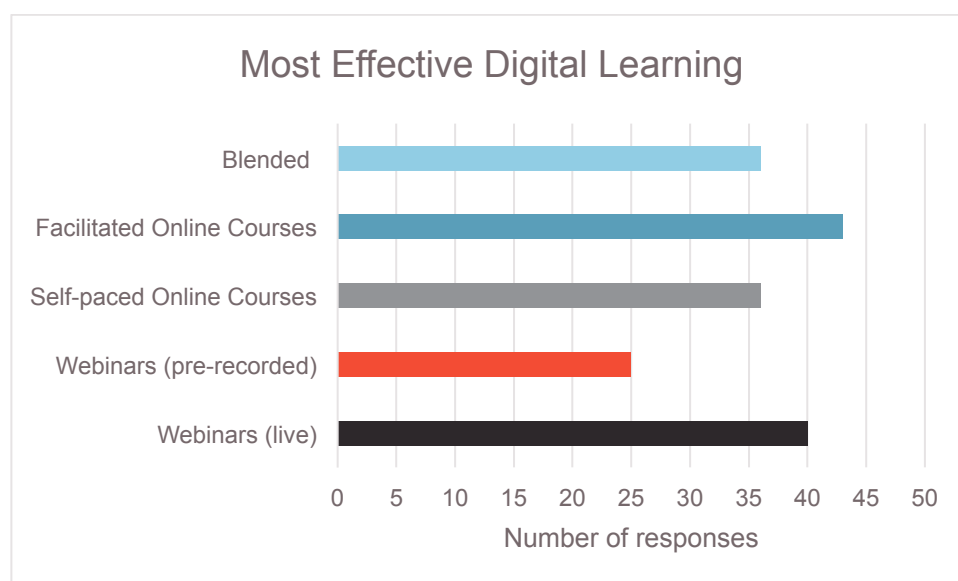


Figure 8. Most Effective Digital Learning

As with any online learning however, there are certain challenges to consider. For the respondents of this survey, the following are listed as the main barriers to accessing to digital learning:

- Bandwidth or internet connectivity issues
- Staff not aware of available resources
- Lack of time
- High course fees
- Resources in the wrong language
- Too much information available

<sup>19</sup> <https://blog.cartong.org/2020/04/10/COVID-19-crisis-how-to-adapt-data-collection-for-monitoring-and-accountability/>

<sup>20</sup> [https://zoom.us/rec/play/vpJ5cOr-2g3Sd3E4wSDAqVwW469LK6shiYW\\_KUEz0i1AnMAZwCgb7RAYuXYaZB976nRqlyvVL2aNx8S?startTime=1587044600000](https://zoom.us/rec/play/vpJ5cOr-2g3Sd3E4wSDAqVwW469LK6shiYW_KUEz0i1AnMAZwCgb7RAYuXYaZB976nRqlyvVL2aNx8S?startTime=1587044600000)

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.calpnetwork.org/publication/cva-in-COVID-19-contexts-guidance-from-the-calp-network/>

This gives an insight into what is required of those designing digital learning tools, namely that they should ensure:

- Connection constraints are considered (videos requiring little bandwidth to watch/asynchronous to enable for different times/etc)
- Effective and targeted dissemination of resources
- Online resources are time efficient for participants
- Free or accessible cost
- Appropriate language or easily translatable
- Relevant to learning needs of target group

## SECTORAL FINDINGS

In the desk review of the sources mentioned so far in this section, data on preferences for digital learning types has not been raised.

## CAPACITY BUILDING NEEDS BY THEME

In order to understand learning needs appropriately, topics were assessed in relation to language and type of organisation. This is in order to support the development of resources as effectively as possible.

## LANGUAGE

### REDR UK LNA

The following section outlines what topics and types of digital learning came up as most prioritised according to the three most indicated languages in the LNA: Arabic, English, and French.

#### ***Arabic***

Twenty-two respondents listed Arabic as the, or one of the, preferred languages of instruction. Out of those listing Arabic, COVID-19 topics was clearly the most favoured topic, followed by Management and Leadership and Safety and Security. In addition to these responses, respondents mentioned Remote Management and Implementation, and Mental Health as further topics of interest.

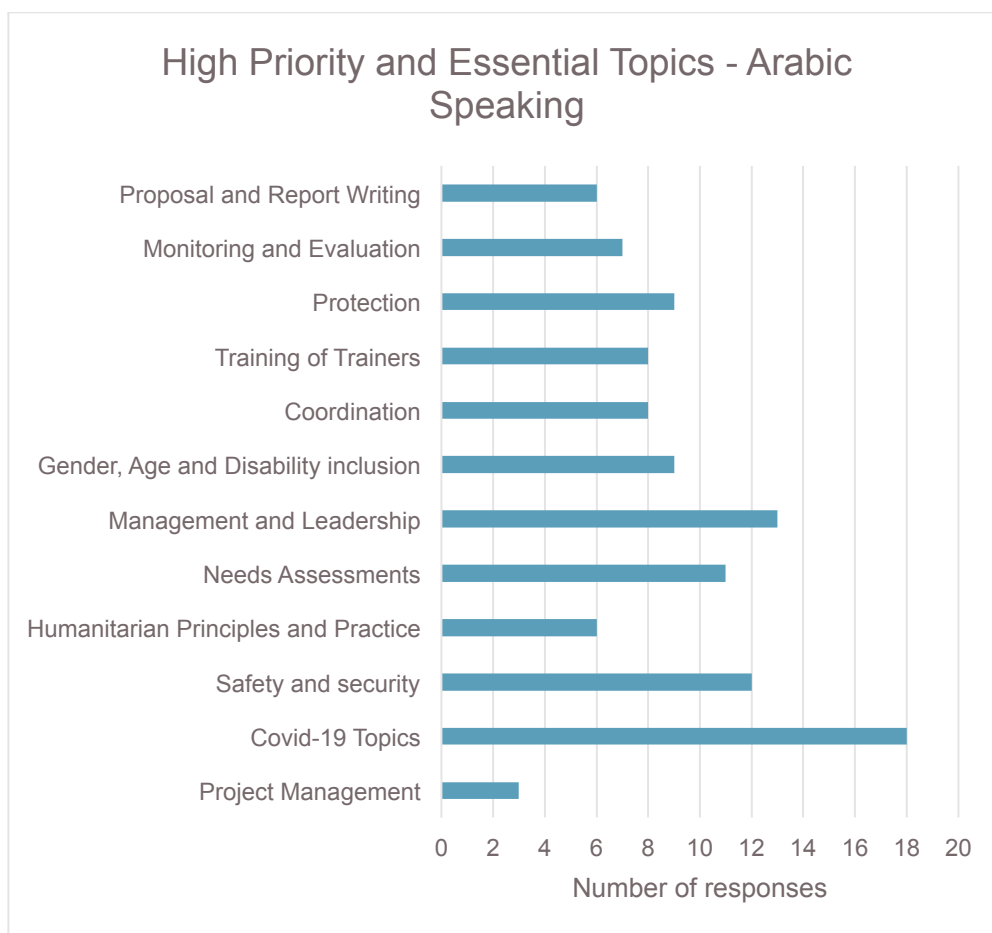


Figure 9. High Priority and Essential Topics – Arabic Speaking

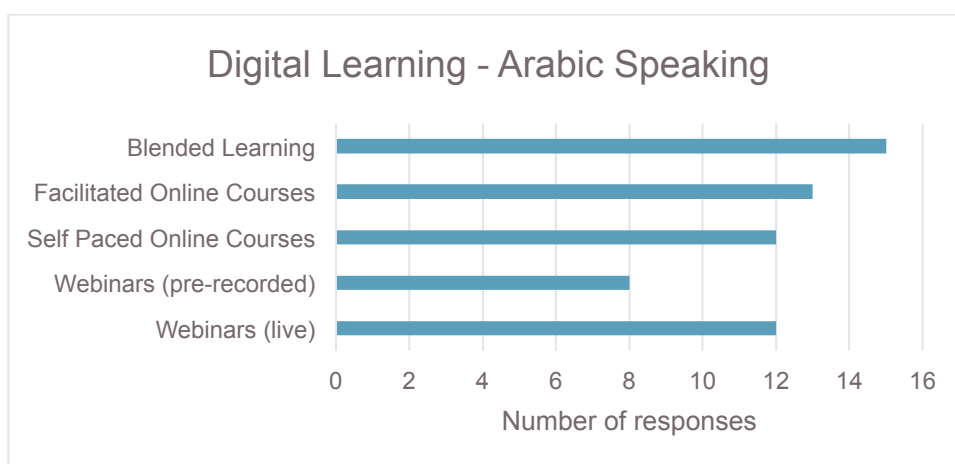


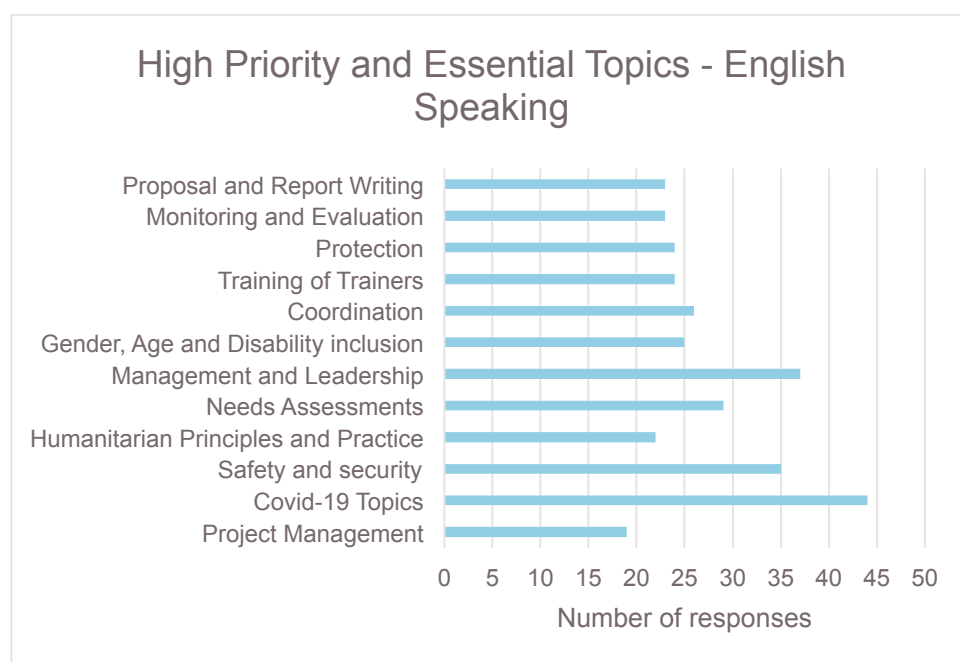
Figure 10. Digital Learning - Arabic

Regarding the preferred type of digital learning, pre-recorded webinars are the least favoured option. The first choice is Blended Learning, with Facilitated Online Learning and live Webinars being a shared second place. This seems to indicate that respondents value the presence of a facilitator and/or a live component, as opposed to learning which is entirely self-led or pre-recorded. The presence of a

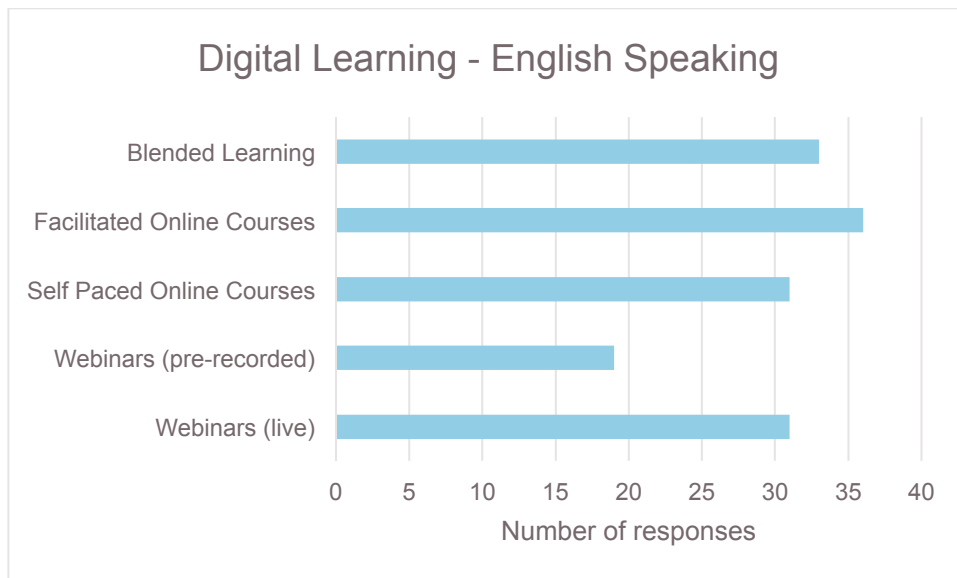
facilitator in a training or workshop is in most situations a guarantee that there is some level of adaptation to the participants and context, even in trainings with standard content as there is room for questions and discussions. The fact that there are less available learning resources online in Arabic could contribute to this as well, however as the pattern is similar to other groups, this could come down to individual learning styles.

### **English**

The most respondents, 56, stated English as the, or one of the, preferred languages of instruction. The pattern is similar to those listing Arabic as the preferred language, with COVID-19 Topics, Management and Leadership, and Safety and Security as the most prioritised topics. There is little variation in the remaining topics.



*Figure 11. High Priority and Essential Topics – English Speaking*



*Figure 12. Digital Learning – English Speaking*

Regarding the most suitable types of digital learning for staff, facilitated online courses was the most preferred choice, followed by Blended Learning. Self-paced Courses and Live Webinars are the next choice. Again, there seems to be an importance placed on learning which is led or guided. The proportion of respondents who listed blended learning or self-paced online courses is in fact very similar to Arabic. As there are a vast amount of self-paced online courses available to this group, the explaining factor cannot be the lack of available learning resources. It is possible that this preference is an expression of individual learning styles, and that courses who have a facilitator present or are blended are often perceived to be of higher quality than ones that are not facilitated.

### **French**

A small number of respondents (6) listed French as one of the preferred languages of instruction.

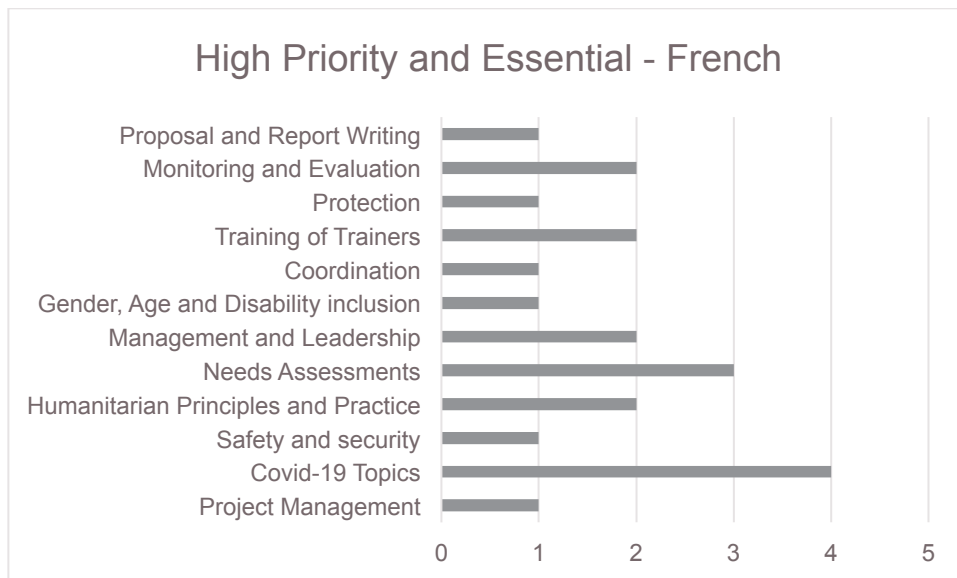


Figure 13. High Priority and Essential Topics - French Speaking

COVID-19 topics are of most relevance for this group, following the trend of English and Arabic. Whilst Management and Leadership was the second most prioritised for both Arabic and English, Needs Assessments is the second choice for French speakers. Safety and Security is not highly prioritised, which could be due to the fact that these respondents also came from larger INGOs that may already have strong systems in place for staff security.

There were almost identical numbers of responses for preferred types of digital learning, however no respondents identified pre-recorded webinars as an important type. The slightly stronger preference for Facilitated Online Courses could speak to these respondents valuing the flexibility of online learning, whilst appreciating the presence of a facilitator.



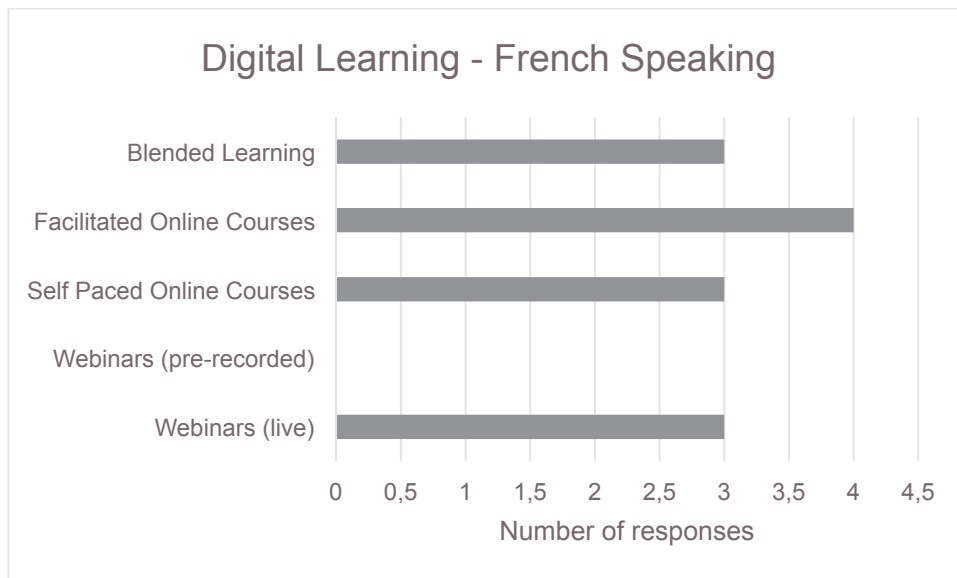


Figure 14. Digital Learning – French Speaking

Looking at the percentages of responses for each topic, disaggregated into language, the results can be seen collated below.

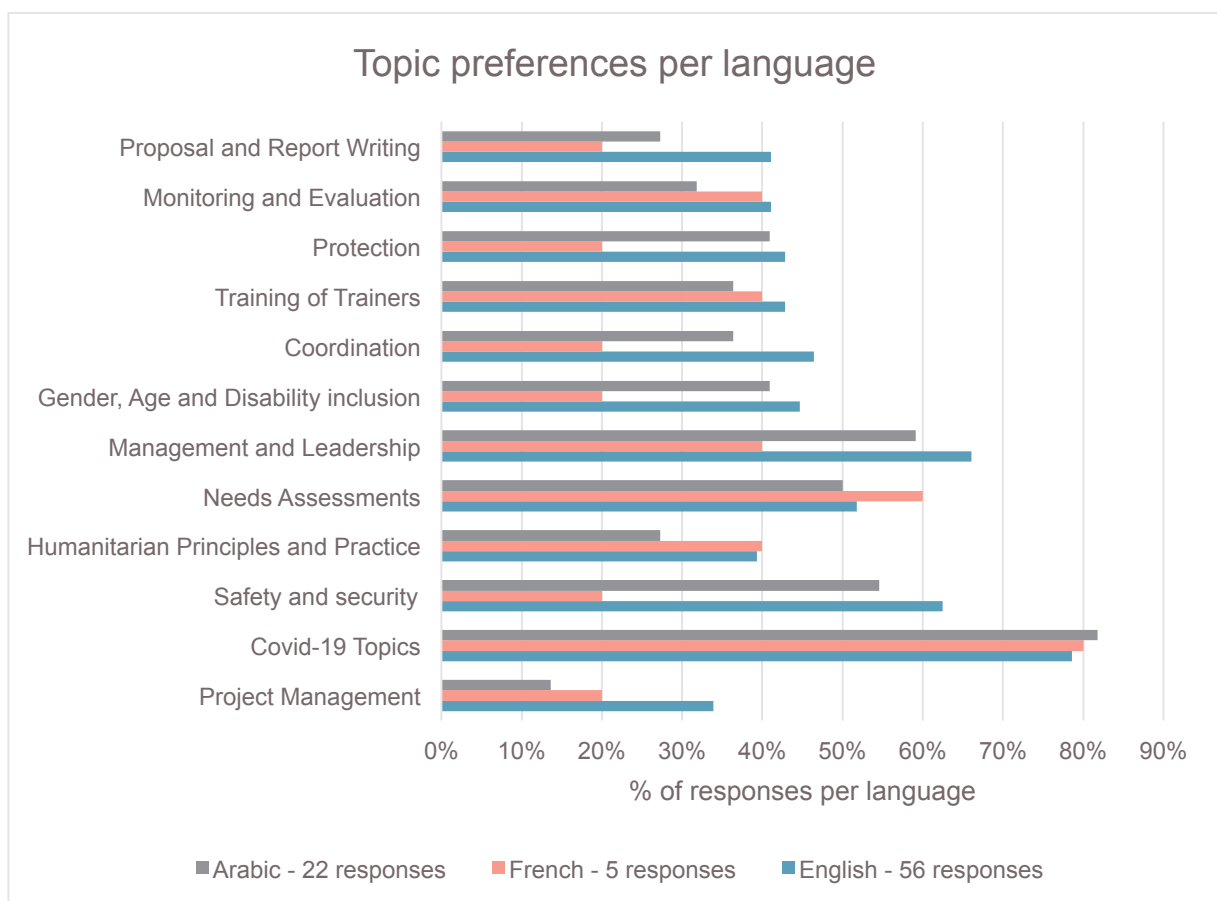


Figure 15. Topic Preferences per Language

In sum, the most preferred topic for all three languages is COVID-19 topics. This means that the same courses and resources covering this topic could be developed and then be translated into different languages, and still hold relevance. The caveat here is that appropriate local contextualisation needs to be made. There is a discrepancy when it comes to the ranking of safety and security, as discussed. As there were only six respondents listing French, the conclusions are only indicative, however the explanation could be the size of the organisations, which, as mentioned, were larger INGOs in this group of respondents. Apart from this, the order of priority for topics further than COVID-19 seems to be somewhat similar, indicating that exchange of learning and best practices on these could be an important and useful aspect for organisations globally. A difference which becomes visible through this comparison is that Arabic and English speakers rate Proposal and Report Writing differently, 27% for the Arabic speaking group and 41% for the English speaking group. Several of the organisations represented in the Arabic speaking group of respondents came from smaller NGOs, and it is possible that they are not accessing or applying for funding in the same way that larger INGOs are, and therefore do not consider this a need.

There is a clear trend of pre-recorded webinars not being preferred, both when looking at language disaggregated responses and all responses for the LNA. However, some comments indicate that pre-recorded webinars are in fact more important, as they would be more accessible if they require low bandwidth and are downloadable, indicating that a one size fits all approach is not inclusive.

## TYPE OF ORGANISATION

### REDR UK LNA FINDINGS

Four main types of organisations can be seen in the respondents of the LNA: INGO, NGO, faith-based organisations, and UN agencies. One cluster representative and one governmental body responded; however the responses were inconclusive and therefore are not included here.

#### **INGOs**

When looking at the high priority and essentially ranked topics for INGOs, the trend is similar to most previous sections. The top four priorities are COVID-19 Topics, Safety and Security, Needs Assessment, and Management and Leadership.

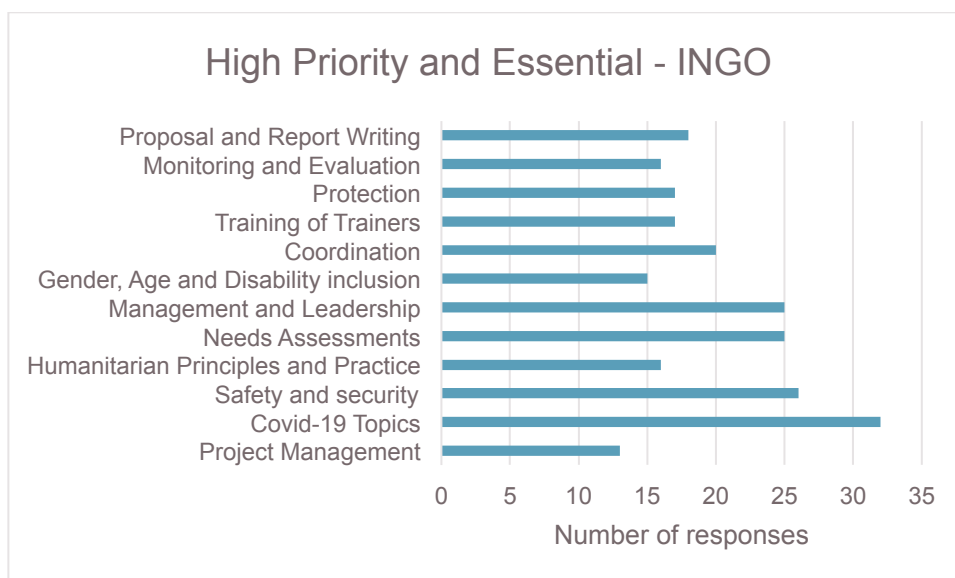


Figure 16. High Priority and Essential Topics - INGOs

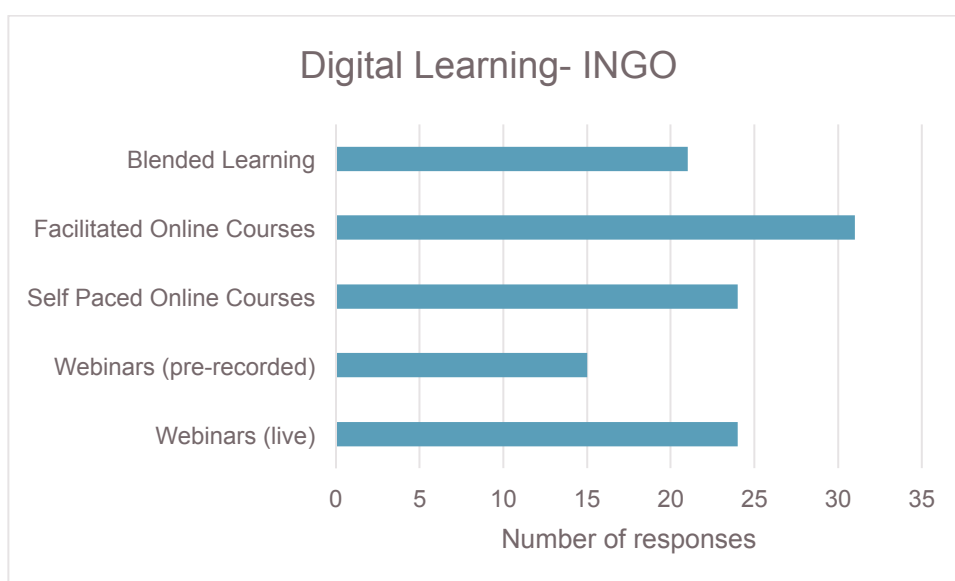


Figure 17. Digital Learning Types - INGOs

The preferred type of digital learning is facilitated online courses, and pre-recorded webinars are the least favoured.

### NGOs

The pattern for preferred topics for NGOs is very similar to INGOs, with the difference that Training of Trainers is equally preferred to Needs Assessment, making the two topics the fourth most popular choice. Almost none of the respondents in this group rate Coordination as the most important topic. This could indicate that the respondents are working more in isolation in terms of their responses and programmes, or that they prioritise capacity building on managing the COVID-19 response within the organisation prior to coordinating with others.

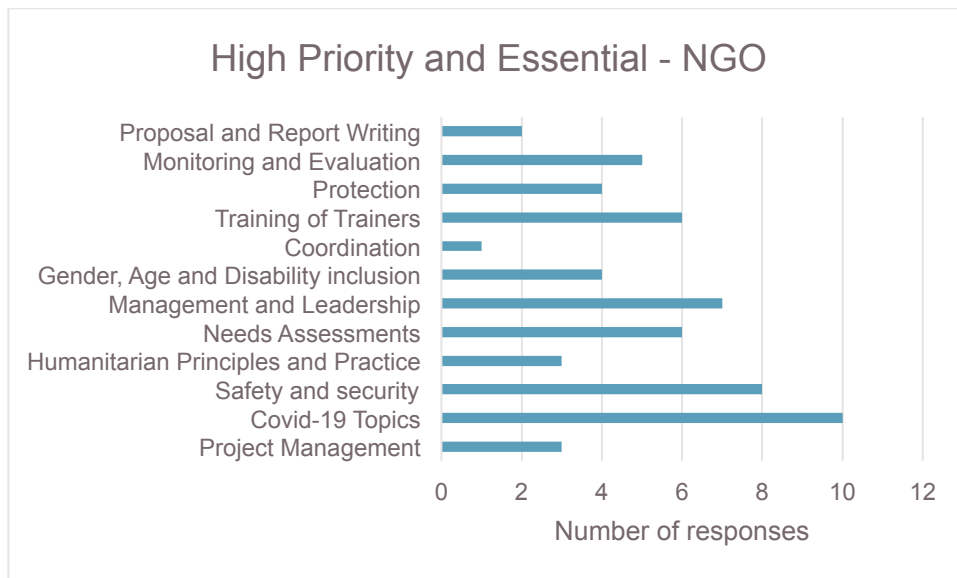


Figure 18. High Priority and Essential Topics - NGOs

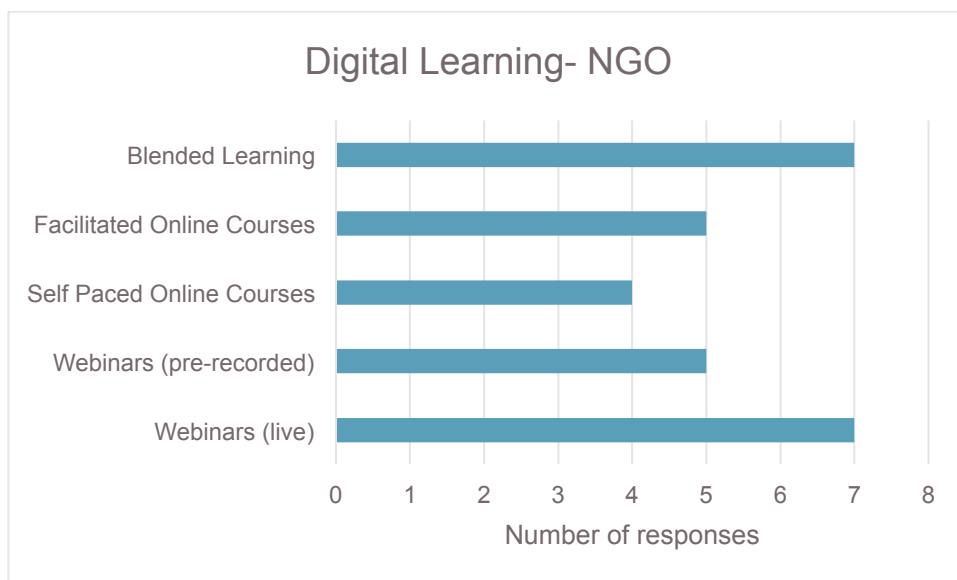


Figure 19. Digital Learning - NGOs

Blended learning and live webinars are the most preferred types of digital learning, and self-paced learning is the least preferred type. Self-paced courses may be more generic and hence not contextualised to the same degree as a pre-recorded webinar or live webinars, meaning that they would be of less use to NGO staff who operate in specific localised contexts.

### **Faith-Based Organisations**

When turning to faith-based organisations, the highest ranked topics differ clearly from other types of organisations. COVID-19 topics are still the highest, however after this comes coordination and protection shared with gender, age and disability

inclusion, and management and leadership. A large proportion of the faith-based organisations are large humanitarian aid organisations, which could explain the strong interest in training on coordination as they know the value and importance of this in emergency responses and may be especially concerned with ensuring staff have capacity on coordination in the context of COVID-19 where there are exceptionally many actors involved.

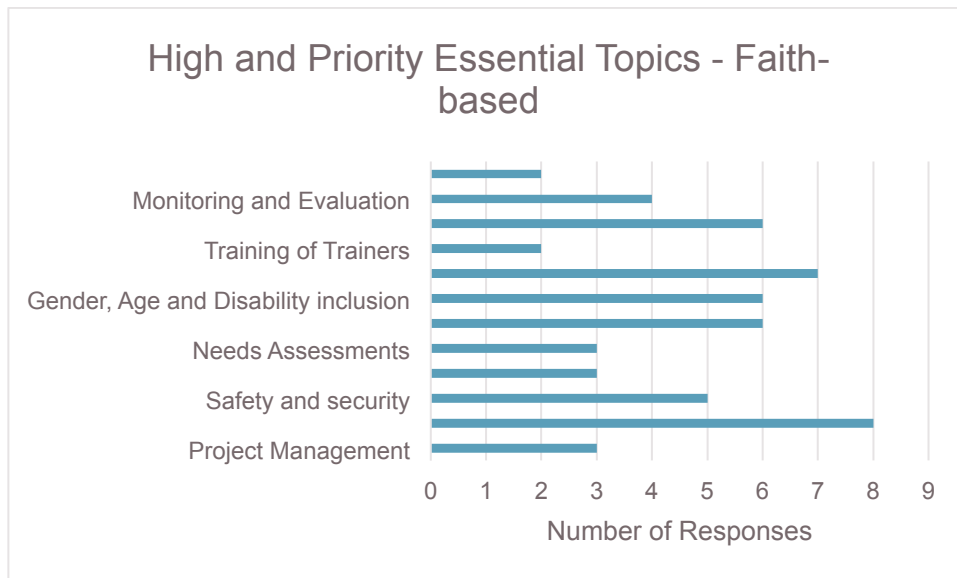


Figure 20. High Priority and Essential Topics – Faith-based Organisations

Blended learning together with live webinars is most favoured, and pre-recorded webinars are again the lowest preferred type of digital learning.

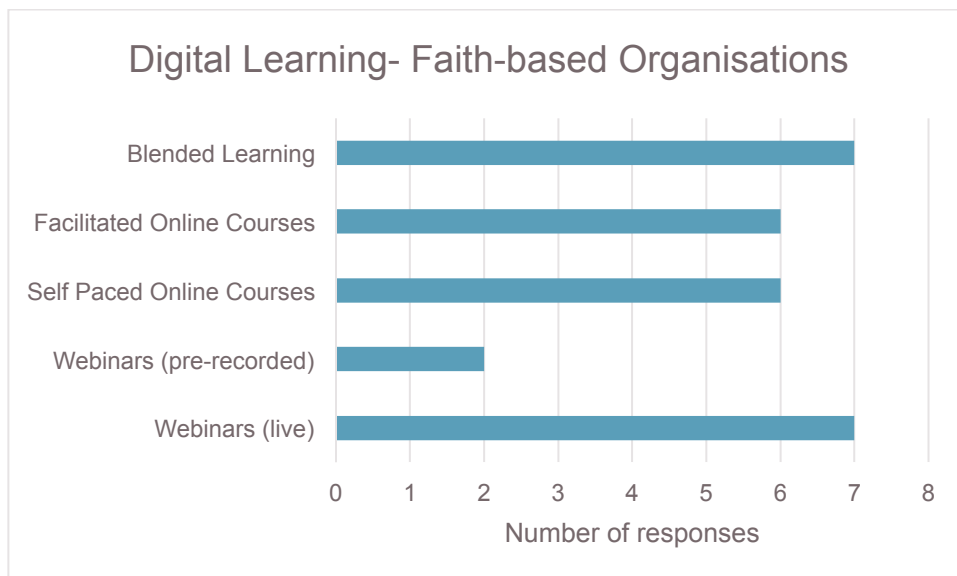


Figure 21. Digital Learning– Faith-based Organisations

## Other

There were respondents in the survey from UN bodies, governmental bodies and one cluster representative. The numbers of responses per group here were low and data is inconclusive so are not included here.

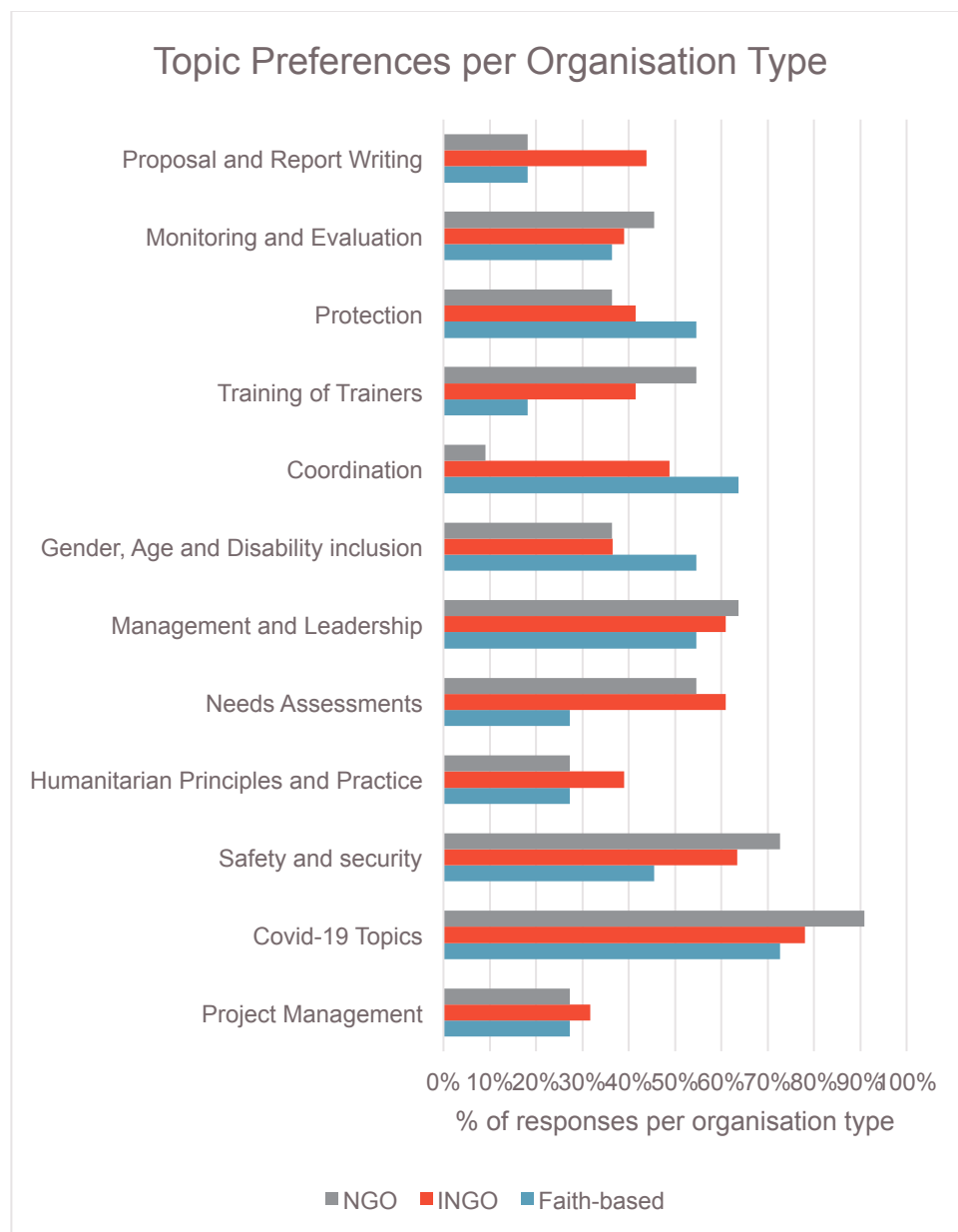


Figure 22. Topic preferences per Organisation Type

In conclusion, while all types of organisations state COVID-19 topics to be of highest importance to them, there are significant differences in what that means in practice. Coordination is much higher ranked for faith-based organisations and Proposal and Report Writing has a different pattern than other courses, in that INGOs are more likely to rank this topic as high priority or essential. Whilst no data has been collected to suggest why, it could be that these organisations are seeing more of a shift in programming rather than merely suspension of activities, and therefore need to

engage with proposal writing at this stage to attract COVID-19 funding. Furthermore, NGOs may be more concerned with focussing on their organisational challenges rather than seeking new funding at this stage. Some calls for proposals may also not be accessible or appropriate to smaller NGOs. Furthermore, 74% of respondents from INGOs state their programmes have shifted to COVID-19 focus, compared to 41% from NGOs and 53% from faith-based organisations. This could mean that INGOs are more engaged in programmatic shifts needing new funding in comparison to other types of organisations.

## SECTORAL FINDINGS

When examining other surveys and assessments, and regional similarities and differences, one can see how there are indeed certain topics shared across regions. Across several regions, topics related to public awareness of COVID-19 are requested<sup>22</sup>. This could imply that the suggestions made for capacity building in figure 5, under COVID-19 information sharing, are especially relevant. Coordination is mentioned in several places indicating that the analysis on coordination needs done above is further strengthened<sup>23</sup>.

Regional differences can however also be found when it comes to learning needs, using ACAPS' survey of HEN members.

Africa:

- Support to develop remote learning approaches<sup>24</sup>

Asia and Oceania

- Use of mobile/IT based cash transfer mechanisms which could assist in serving vulnerable populations<sup>25</sup>

Americas

- Stronger scenario planning or risk analysis<sup>26</sup>

Europe

- Translation into languages of refugee communities<sup>27</sup>
- Info for homeless populations<sup>28</sup>

Development and translation of resources should be targeted and intentional, and it cannot be assumed that one size fits all.

<sup>22</sup>[https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/200420\\_acaps\\_humanitarian\\_experts\\_network\\_survey\\_2\\_results\\_final.pdf](https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/200420_acaps_humanitarian_experts_network_survey_2_results_final.pdf) and

<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Impact%20of%20COVID%2019%20prevention%20measures%20on%20humanitarian%20operations%20for%20protection%20sector.pdf>

<sup>23</sup>[https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/200420\\_acaps\\_humanitarian\\_experts\\_network\\_survey\\_2\\_results\\_final.pdf](https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/200420_acaps_humanitarian_experts_network_survey_2_results_final.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

## CONCLUSION

This report has analysed the findings of the RedR UK LNA on capacity building needs of international aid organisations in the context of COVID-19. The findings show what respondents identify as key areas of need for their staff, as well as what organisational challenges they face. The data shows that organisations have been strongly impacted by COVID-19, through suspension of, or a shift in, activities, and face challenges to maintain pre-existing operations. The sectoral findings confirm the impact of COVID-19 on programming through disruption and shut-down of programmes. Against this backdrop, donor support and flexibility is key in order that organisations are able to address the rapidly changing needs of their workforce.

Respondents of the LNA list the topics of Management and Leadership, Safety and Security, Needs Assessment, and COVID-19 specific topics as the most needed. They also requested training on fundamental programming topics, such as project management and M&E but with a COVID-19 lens. This can also be seen in the findings from the wider sector. The sectoral findings further point in the direction of COVID-19 topics and Coordination being key topics for actors in the sector.

When analysing the findings by type of organisation, COVID-19 topics are yet again ranked as the highest priority. Following this however, there are significant differences. Coordination is higher ranked for faith-based organisations and Proposal and Report Writing is more valued by INGOs. Training of Trainers is a more prioritised topic for NGOs than other types of organisations. When breaking the findings on capacity building needs down into the three main languages, Arabic, English, and French, the most preferred topic is the same: COVID-19 topics.

The findings on capacity building needs indicate that the same courses and resources covering COVID-19 topic could be developed and then be translated into different languages, and still hold relevance. Once geographical location is determined appropriate local contextualisation needs to be made. For those regions who share the order of priority for topics further than COVID-19, exchange of learning and best practices on these could be an important and useful aspect for organisations globally. RedR UK further identifies capacity building needs within remote management, delivery, and working, mental health for aid workers, and coaching and mentoring schemes to meet capacity building of organisations and their partners. Workshop solutions to identify innovative solutions for challenges is also identified as an opportunity.

The most valued digital learning types identified in the report are facilitated online learning and live webinars. However, it is important to look at this data with a contextual lens, as individual comments indicate that pre-recorded webinars are more relevant, as they would be more accessible if they require low bandwidth and are downloadable. Whatever digital learning solution is used to meet the capacity



needs outlined in this report, they should consider the commonly identified challenges and be designed to counter these.

According to the results, staff of organisations are faced with a shift in both working modalities and the projects and programmes they work in. As can be seen in the data, organisations are experiencing programmatic shifts, but staff have yet to see their roles being changed to other or new projects, meaning staff are facing a period of significant change. The findings from the wider sector confirm and add to the understanding that work circumstances have changed significantly for staff in the international aid sector. The findings of RedR UK's LNA do not point to substantial consequences for staff in terms of furloughs or ending of contracts. As a contrast to RedR UK's LNA however, further sources in the sector have found that a large number of organisations are letting staff go or changing the terms of their contracts. Possibly the difference in data comes from the difference in survey respondent roles. The sectoral analysis emphasises the financial difficulty organisations find themselves in and the need for innovative models to face this challenge.

The findings of this report give a deeper insight into the capacity building needs of staff within the international aid community and highlight the importance of a solid understanding of target groups when designing and selecting learning interventions. In order to be most effective for both staff in the sector and ultimately target populations, it is key that interventions are based on available data and an understanding of the evolving landscape of capacity building needs. This report gives a snapshot of the situation at the time of publication and as capacity gaps evolve RedR UK will continue to monitor learning needs to support interventions to be consistently useful.

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