

Call to action for the immediate prioritization of professional development to accelerate the global COVID-19 response

The Urgency of our Call

The COVID-19 pandemic is the defining global health and livelihoods crisis of our time. As agencies mobilize to respond to this crisis it is important that the sector, both NGOs and funders, react quickly to the changing operational environment.

International development and humanitarian organizations have launched unprecedented global appeals to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The **billions of dollars** raised will be converted into projects which in turn will be implemented, in most cases, by local actors. Ownership, leadership, and resources must also be transferred to local and national actors to avoid a simple transference of risk.

It is imperative that **local and national actors have the ability to access timely, targeted, and credible professional development** to help them navigate this new context and deliver quality assistance to their communities, safely.

Lessons learned from the Western Africa Ebola¹ response (2013-2016) point to clear, associated actions that should define the global response to this pandemic. These include:



These three critical elements have limited impact in isolation, but together can meaningfully contribute to the success of the global COVID-19 response.

¹ <https://www.odi.org/blogs/16779-covid-19-five-lessons-ebola>

What does the response need?

The response needs **collective action** around critical blockages and enablers. Now is the time for professional development to be allowed and prioritized as a legitimate expenditure in project budgets. Investment in areas such as project management, remote management, adaptive management, and more will mean that local actors acquire the knowledge, skills, and tools that will enable them to keep engaging and serving at this time.

As the context of COVID-19 evolves, there must be an open dialogue between local, national, and international NGOs, actors, and funders to ensure that the programmatic and operational elements of the global response are reflective of this ever-changing environment.

As best we can, the sector should be identifying **common** and **consistent** standards and practices to apply across the response. This is arguably most important for project management, which will form the foundation of the global response. Project management is the mechanism through which the billions of dollars of aid are converted into timely, quality relief for communities affected by COVID-19. Simply put, effective project management means contributing to healthier lives and improved livelihoods for communities. A common project management standard will ensure coordination across the response, and by supporting the immediate and recovery phases, act as an investment for the future of the sector. PM4NGOs has witnessed, first-hand, the impact professional development in project management can have. As a solution from the sector, for the sector, and by the sector, Project DPro (formerly PMD Pro) has been adopted and adapted by development and humanitarian professionals in **167 countries** over the last decade, with **75%** of certified professionals in developing countries. PM4NGOs recognizes the development and humanitarian sectors as, primarily, sectors of project managers; now more than ever we need to get creative in this traditionally underinvested area.

The **COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan** has identified the following enabling factors and conditions for achieving the strategic priorities, which align directly with our call to action:

Strategic Objective 1:

- National and local emergency coordination mechanisms are effective throughout.
- Logistics, information management, coordination, and planning procedures and platforms are in place.

Strategic Objectives 2 and 3:

- Capacities for real-time monitoring of the situation, needs, and response are established.
- Flexible and reprogrammable funding is provided, in line with current Grand Bargain commitments.

What will get us there?

01.

The immediate allowance of funds to be used for professional development of local organisations.

02.

The simplification of funding mechanisms to reflect the more localized and adaptive approaches to the professional development requirements.

03.

The prioritisation of resources for support around localisation, remote management and adaptive management.

04.

The targeted and timely professional development of staff and local actors having secured funding.

05.

The investment and utilization of new training methodologies and technologies to ensure remote training equates to impact.

06.

Constant open dialogue and collective action to ensure the correct balance between professional development and implementation.

07.

The transfer of ownership, leadership, and resources to national and local actors and a continuous assessment of that mechanism to ensure an avoidance of risk transference.

08.

The continuous support of our partners responding to the changing context of the pandemic response.

09.

The sharing of relevant practices, materials and knowledge across the sector, particularly focusing on project management, remote management, localization, and adaptation.

10.

Consider utilizing Project DPro (PMD Pro) as a common project management standard, adding our collective expertise to its growing community of practitioners

Over the last decade PM4NGOs has witnessed the power of localized professional development in project management. Investing in professional development will ensure that those responding to this pandemic have what they need to better support communities and will ensure that together, we emerge from this crisis more resilient and prepared for the future. Together, our investments and commitment to excellence in project management can help save lives. We invite you to join us by filling out the endorsement form available at the link below.

Endorse and Support the Call to Action

<https://www.pm4ngos.org/call-to-action>