LEARNING PATHWAYS PILOT REPORT

EU AV Enhancing Aid Capacities

With the support of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative of the European Union

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SUMMARY

As part of the EU Enhancing Aid capacities project a pilot on Learning Pathways was conducted with 18 NS and IFRC participants. The pilot indicates that there is a clear need for a user friendly and modern solution for learning pathways. Additionally, the pilot confirmed the assumption that learning pathways should be individualized and offer personalized learning opportunities based on a competency self-assessment. User interviews resulted in the understanding that the pathway has to include information materials on the Rapid Response system to help participants understand deployment procedures. Additionally, the pathway seems to function best for people who are looking to develop Foundational or Tier 1 competencies as there are not many learning opportunities available for higher tiers. The next step is to develop these learning pathways on the IFRC learning platform.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

EUAV pilot

This pilot was run in the framework of the EUAV Enhancing Aid Capacities project in 2020 February-2020 April and was designed to test Learning Pathways for IFRC Rapid Response personnel.

There were 18 participants enregistered:

- 11 Finnish Red Cross EUAV
- 2 German Red Cross EUAV
- 5 IFRC staff

17 participants completed the self-assessment and nine chose to share their Learning Pathway.

Learning Pathways Definition

As there are many understanding of what a learning pathway could be a definition is presented here for the learning pathways in this project:

- An individualized list of competency-based learning opportunities
- Targets the competencies the user needs to develop to meet role profile requirements
- Encourages you to consider on-the-job or social learning opportunities next to trainings
- It is a development and not an assessment tool
- Targets the IFRC Rapid Response core competencies (within the scope of this pilot)

Learning Pathways in Use

The tool follows a **three-step process:**

1. The user learns about the IFRC Rapid Response system
2. The user first fills out a self-assessment on the IFRC Rapid Response core competencies.
3. Based on the report they look up learning opportunities to target their weaknesses and organize them into a learning pathway template.

Please see the annexes for examples and further materials on this.

Mapping of Learning Opportunities

In order to be able to provide individualized and competency-based Learning Pathways a comprehensive mapping exercise was conducted with support of the British Red Cross. During this exercise the following was mapped:

- All F2G generalist trainings
- 36 Internal online trainings
- 4 external F2F trainings

As a result, a GAP analysis is available on the competencies and tiers covered by the mapped trainings. Please note that the mapping is a continuously ongoing process.

In cooperation with the British Red Cross a set of process notes have been developed and disseminated to aid technical teams who are looking to map their trainings against their competency framework. *Please see the annexes for the process notes.*

IFRC Rapid Response Core Competencies

A competency defines behavior, knowledge and skills; it describes how work is to be done. It differs from objectives, which indicate what must be done, and activities that need to be completed.

There are twenty competencies in the framework, and these can be grouped into four broad categories:

1. Red Cross Red Crescent competencies
2. Operational competencies
3. Cross-Cutting competencies
4. Behavioral competencies

Tier Definitions

Foundational tier: Foundational knowledge needed to build a deployable level of competency in this area.

Tier 1: Displays a practical understanding of effective day-to-day behaviors for this competency and able to function effectively as part of a Red Cross Red Crescent team.

Tier 2: Displays impact for this competency by providing advice and guidance to others within a defined scope. Translates strategic decision into sectoral direction.

Tier 3: Models the behaviors and creates an environment which enables these behaviors to be displayed. Operates at a strategic, multi-sectoral level in a response of any magnitude.

The Steps of the Pilot Exercise

1. **Needs assessment**: 14 interviews conducted to explore and understand the need from the user's perspective. The main finding was that in order for the Learning Pathway to be successful it has to inform participants on the IFRC Rapid Response system.
2. **Development**: An online self-assessment tool, a Competency Development Guide and a Learning pathway template was developed.
3. **Test**: The participants went through the process of setting up their Learning Pathways following these steps:
   - Learning about the Rapid Response system
   - choosing a role profile from the catalogue of services
   - Taking an online competency-based self-assessment test
   - Filling out their Learning Pathways with the Competency Development Guide
4. **Consultations**: During the test consultation slots were available for the participants to discuss their Learning Pathways. Eight participants signed up for a half an hour conversation.
5. **Lessons Learned**: A questionnaire was sent out to collect feedback. 12 responses have arrived, and the results are presented here.

Please see the annexes for more detailed descriptions.

MAIN FINDINGS:

Summary of the survey and interviews conducted with the participants

There is a great need for a Learning Pathway tool

Participants in general expressed a lot of enthusiasm and interest in the Learning Pathways process. There is a great interest in joining the IFRC roster and learning more about the Rapid Response system. Additionally, the individual nature of the Learning Pathway was highlighted as they were excited to learn how they measure up against their chosen role profile and what are the learning opportunities available for them to develop competencies to meet role profile requirements.

> *"Having different sources shared to read about the IFRC Rapid Response System was very helpful..."*

> *"It helped to point out all the areas of improvement."*

> *"How I can start taking steps towards a new learning path and work profile. Very useful."*

Need for comprehensive and user-friendly information on the IFRC Rapid Response system

Participants in general expressed a need and the usefulness of information materials on the Rapid Response system. They need to understand how the system works if they want to deploy in it. However, the content available right now is not necessarily user-friendly enough.

> *"Having different sources shared to read about the IFRC Rapid Response System was very helpful. A visualization / graphic of the Rapid Response System might support a quicker understanding."*

The Learning pathway is more useful for Foundational and Tier 1:

Generally, people who were interested in developing Foundational tier competencies were happier with the experience as people who have already scored Tier 1 complained that there aren't enough learning opportunities for Tier 2 and Tier 3 and face-to-face trainings are very selective. For foundational tier and tier 1 there are many free easy-access online trainings available.

> *".. does not include many learning opportunities, especially for tier 2 or 3"*

> *"… resources or training suggestions for higher tiers are limited ..."*

Need for coaching/shadowing learning initiatives for Tier 2 and Tier 3

While it has to be emphasized that competencies for these tiers are developed mainly through on the job learning, informal learning could also play a great role. Coaching, shadowing, and peer learning opportunities could be developed and tested to aid people in developing their competencies to higher tiers.

> *"Social learning, On the job projects, and Online learning activities are not clear in practice. They are dependent on what is actually available at a given moment. In current deployment on the job projects are not feasible. So is social learning. Would be great if IFRC could provide such opportunities"*

Need for clarification of the application process for the Rapid Response roster

The learning pathway answers the question: "What can I learn to develop my competencies towards my desired role profile?" However, naturally the questions arise in participants: Once I have developed my competencies how do I apply for the roster? The application process should be clarified in the Learning Pathways.

> *"... Could have included a recruitment pathway for the applicant to understand the procedure of the selection process for the rapid response roster ..."*

Managing expectations

It is important to clearly communicate that the learning pathway is not a guarantee for getting into the roster. The widely shared pre-conception seems to be that the learning pathway is an assessment tool that grants access to the roster. However, the learning pathway is a personal development tool that empowers individuals to work on their competencies towards desired role profiles. Such as, it only provides information on available learning opportunities and the Rapid Response system and does not function as an official assessment tool for the roster.

Need for a modern and online solution

Participants have expressed the need for a solution that is not paper-based and does not require time-consuming manual steps on their side. For this purpose, an online version of the Learning Pathway is being developed on the IFRC learning platform. In this version the self-assessment is specific to the role profile and the learning opportunities to fill competency gaps are automatically offered by the platform.

> *"Technically the whole process should be upgraded to the 2020. No Word files, up-to-date self-assessment platform etc."*

> *"… I think online profile, integrated for example to Learning Platform, would make it way more accessible and useful..."*
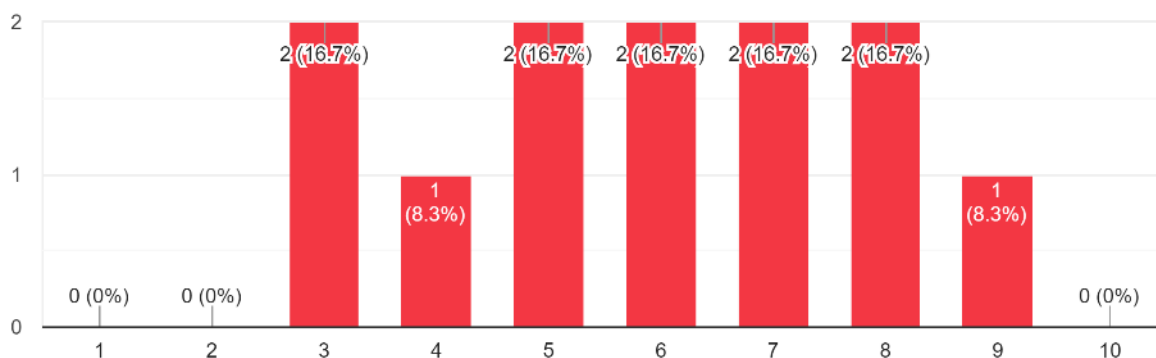
Bellow, please find the highlighted results of the survey. For the entire report, please see the annexes.

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

Overall experience

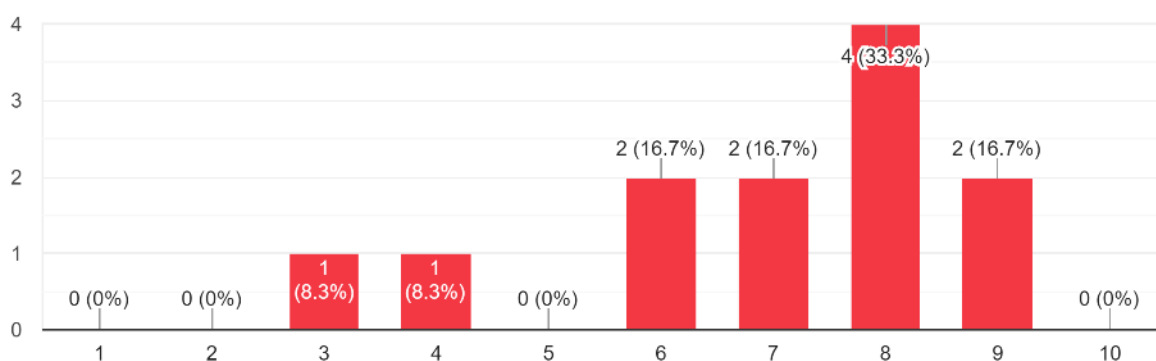Please grade your overall experience with the Learning Pathway pilot.

12 responses

Information on the IFRC Rapid Response system

Please grade your overall experience on the information shared on the IFRC Rapid Response System

12 responses

Overall: Participants expressed a need for a user-friendly way to explain how to apply to get into the roster.

"Information presented was clear and very thorough. Could have included a recruitment pathway for the applicant to understand the procedure of the selection process for the rapid response roster and of deploying personnel."

"provides a very good general overview of what it is and what expectations are for different roles within - remaining question: what practical steps can interested candidates take to be accepted into the roster (apart from learning - more on application procedure)"

"Having different sources shared to read about the IFRC Rapid Response System was very helpful. A visualization / graphic of the Rapid Response System might support a quicker understanding."

"The material available on FedNet is not very user-friendly. This is not something that you can learn just by reading about it - a more interactive format would be better."

"It has remained unclear how I can actually apply for the System and how I can utilize the responses from the Learning Pathway."

Self-assessment

Please grade your overall experience with the Self Assessment on the IFRC Learning Platform

12 responses
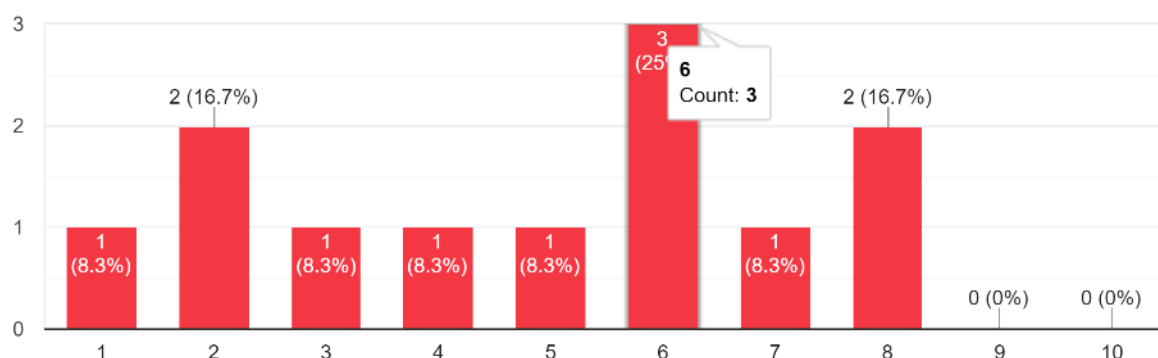
Overall: Participants expressed a need for the self-assessment to be more user-friendly in length and relevance and a better design for the report.

*"...There was **repetition** in the questionnaire, especially at the end. The **results were unbelievably difficult to decipher."***

*"Most of the questions were not applicable to my experience/position, so I ended clicking "N/A" most of the time. **Moreover, many of the questions were designed for people with management position or particular technical background.** Also, many of the questions appeared multiple times in the test."*

"I felt like some "questions" were designed for evaluating somebody after a mission, rather than assessing their knowledge and competency in general. But at times it was not even clear for me. .. "*

"Technically it seems not to be from 2020."

"It was way too long. First 25 minutes I really concentrated but after that just could not. I think I used about one hour to finish it completely."

"Many of the questions were very irrelevant and repetitive, probably majority of them. Also, questions are so abstract that without further information you don't understand what they expect you to answer. (Example: "Coordinates teams and stakeholders involved in assessments to integrate the assessment process throughout the whole operational cycle")"

"...Most of my answers where in the higher scale, therefore, it was very surprising that in the final 'report', nearly in every category I was ranked as below average. Since there was no explanation on grading, that left me more confused than before I started. This is the most unclear part of the process - the grading, scaling and comparison of candidates."

Competency Development Guide

Please grade your overall experience with the Competency Development Guide.
12 responses
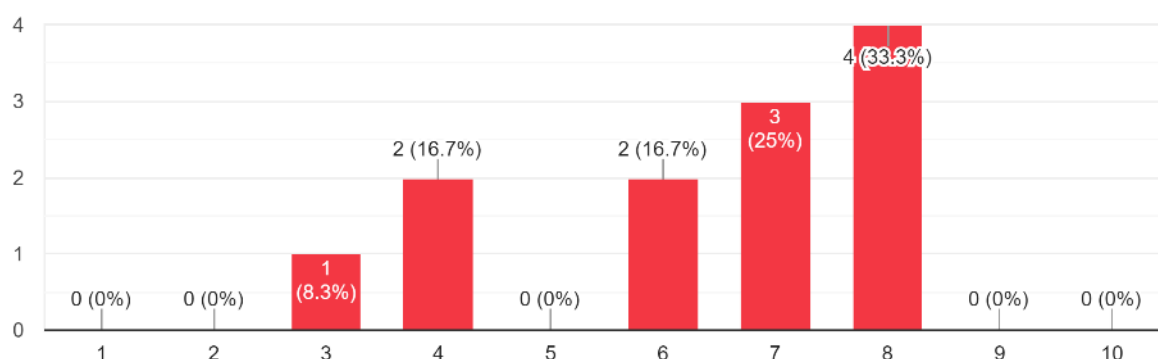
Overall: Participants expressed that there are not enough options listed for tier 2 and 3. They have also expressed a need for more information on trainings, better access to face-to-face training, and a need for a more automatized process.

"Good idea, does not include many learning opportunities, especially for tier 2 or 3"

"The Competency Development Guide could have carried more information and thereby been more helpful. I feel like the use of acronyms and non-existing information on the courses made me have to Google too many things. At best/worst, I had 11 tabs open on my laptop. I feel there was a lot that was not self-explanatory

e.g. RedR UK MPPE. It would also be good to understand where these courses and trainings can be undergone without having to find all the information yourself."

" Also, I think there should be more trainings in general mentioned, especially online trainings. There are lots of trainings available out the RCRC developing the competencies - we should acknowledge and utilize those better."

"It is a good reference document as it gives some specific advise per competency. However, resources or training suggestions for higher tiers are limited ..."
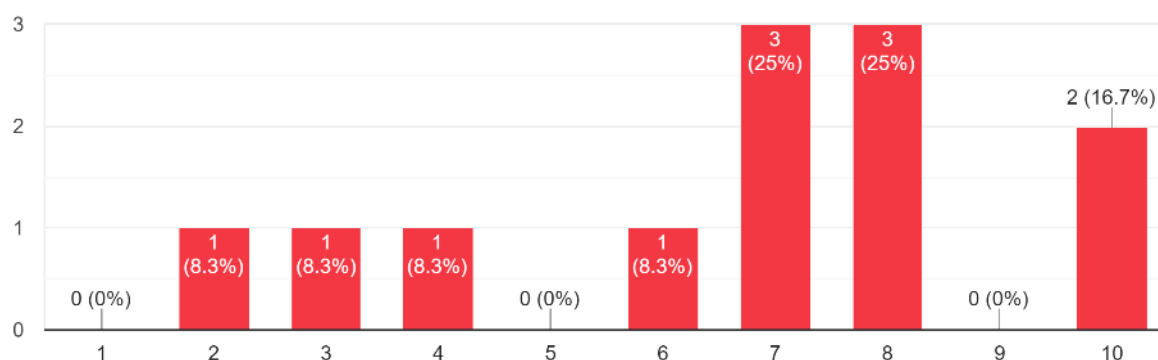
"A more tailored approach could have been helpful."

"It was useful in terms of suggesting online learning materials, but the number of face-to-face trainings mentioned in the guide is quite limited, especially for Tier 2 and 3."

Learning Pathway Template

Please grade your overall experience with the filling out the Learning Pathway Template.
12 responses

Overall: Participants expressed a need for an online version.

"Good to understand your weaknesses and how courses and other learning possibilities can strengthen your skills. Also good to make a time-frame and set focus on improving yourself step by step. Template was clear and didn't raise questions."

"Work intensive task with unclear format of questions"

"I found it quite useless. I think online profile, integrated for example to Learning Platform, would make it way more accessible and useful..."

"Social learning, On the job projects, and Online learning activities are not clear in practice. They are dependent on what is actually available at a given moment. In current deployment on the job projects are not feasible. So is social learning. Would be great if IFRC could provide such opportunities (e.g. for each work area, locate

people willing to coach and mentor others, compile its own recommended list of best books, YouTube videos and other online resources for particular topics, perhaps, suggested by the experts that already work in that particular area, that could be updated on the go). That would save time for everyone, and ensure that we are using high quality resources."

"There should be information on how I can access the F2F trainings. .."

What were the elements of the Learning Pathway process that were useful or beneficial for you? Why?

Overall: participants expressed that the individualized nature was helpful and learning more about role profile requirements was a big added value.

"Understanding weaknesses."

*"The process itself was a good initiation by the IFRC. **Also, further familiarization with the change and core competencies."***

*"It was interesting **to learn more about the Rapid Response of the IFRC."***

*"**Competency Development Guide** and the website with all the **profiles and their ToRs** were very useful to see."*

*"The discussions with Dorottya, as they **forced you to think your position and skills**."*

*"understanding the whole RCRC SURGE system a lot better and **knowing expectations and requirements for specific roles or profiles"***

*"It helped to point out all the **areas of improvement."***

*"It was good to see what the core and technical competencies are **expected by IFRC,** and what level of competencies are associated with a given role profile."*

What were the elements of the Learning Pathway process that were not useful or not beneficial for you? Why?

*"The long questionnaire on Learning Platform was very long and lots of irrelevant parts or repetition. Could **be sorted out for different profiles** or edited further."*

*"no new opportunities in terms of training or personal development, **no leads to actually becoming accepted into the roster"***

*"The process **was very long."***

*"**It did not provide me with actual information or guidance on what I can do to be accepted into the Surge pool."***

What would you say you have learnt from this process?

"What rapid response is, how candidates are selected, how I can make a plan to develop my skills"

"My positioning regarding to the Core Competencies - that I have quite nice the foundation in many of them."

"How I can start taking steps towards a new learning path and work profile. Very useful."

"That supposedly I have everything needed, yet have no chances to become part of the pool."

Considering your experience as an EU Aid Volunteer, how interested are you in joining the IFRC Rapid Response System?

11 responses
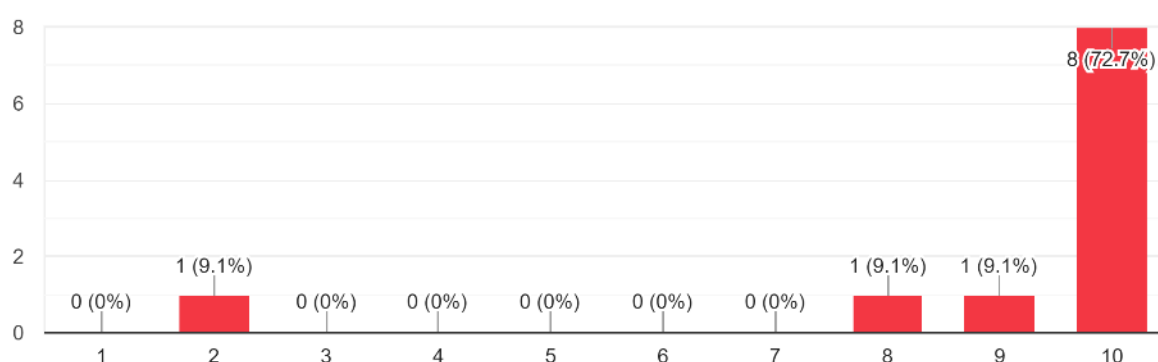
What would you say are the main challenges for you in joining the IFRC Rapid Response System?

Overall: participants expressed that a lack of experience and lack of information is the main challenge for them

"First gaining more experience and expertise in DM."

"Lack of information. Also, my expectation is that you need a long RC experience to be able to get to the roster."

"lack of experience (number of years) from response operations"

Please provide any additional feedback or insight that you think could aid the development of the Learning Pathways.

"Technically the whole process should be upgraded to the 2020. No Word files, up-to-date self-assessment platform etc."

"Many suggested online trainings recommended are too basic if you have even a bit general knowledge on the humanitarian sector, or work-life in general"

"I feel that all the F2F trainings related to the core competencies are impossible to reach without very long RCRC experience. I would like to see either more easy to approach F2F trainings or more in-dept online learning opportunities."

ANNEXES

- IFRC Core Competency framework
- Competency Development Guide
- Mapping Process Notes
- Learning Pathways template and samples from participants
- Results of the survey
- Needs assessment interview questions
- Informative presentation with screenshots of the learning platform iteration