

COVID-19 EVALUATION AND RESEARCH AGENDA

Emerging Themes from the
International Red Cross and
Red Crescent Movement



DECEMBER 2020



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 global pandemic has called upon the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) to respond with unprecedented speed, agility and innovation in a highly uncertain and rapidly changing context. In light of such a profound shift in its operating context and ways of working, how should the Movement evaluate and learn from its response? What are the most important questions the Movement should be asking itself to inform continuing adaptation in response to the pandemic, and to better prepare for future shocks?

This document serves as a framework to guide reflections on the experiences and responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 Evaluation and Research Agenda outlined in these pages offers evaluation questions and research topics that serve as a shared framework to be used within and across National Societies and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) network.

This agenda was generated from the collaborative output of four learning events in late October 2020, convened by IFRC's Learn to Change initiative¹ and facilitated by the Presencing Institute.² It is the product of a learning process that involved over 100 staff and volunteers from 63 countries. The result is an Evaluation and Research Agenda that is built from the questions and issues of most concern from within the IFRC network, the Movement, and the frontlines of the COVID-19 response.

The COVID-19 Evaluation and Research Agenda offers a common framework that may serve to optimize evaluation and research efforts and investments by aligning different parts of the Movement to a common set of questions and themes. It assumes that every evaluation will need to be contextualized. Therefore, at times it may also be necessary to explore additional context-specific questions. But where possible, alignment to this common agenda will aid in our joint aims in evaluation, research and learning across the Movement as a whole.

The COVID-19 Learning Series tested an approach to learning that will be further developed in the next stage of the Learn to Change program which will be launched in 2021. Learn to Change aims to create spaces for sharing, harvesting and synthesizing learning from across the Movement, while introducing and practicing the tools of organizational learning. This learning series will be followed with other events and opportunities of this kind to deepen the capacity of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement to operate as a learning organization, capable of adapting and responding to current and future disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹ For more information on Learn to Change, see: www.welearntochange.org

² For more information on the Presencing Institute, see: <https://www.presencing.org/aboutus>

The Evaluation and Research Agenda proposes Evaluation Questions and Research Topics around the themes in three broad areas of focus below, followed by a fourth section which captures broader strategic reflections. Questions and topics relate to the issues summarized in the issue areas below:

Impact on the Movement's Core Mission & Services

- **Core services: service delivery and innovation:** how COVID-19 impacted on existing services, what new services were developed, and how National Societies adapted to new circumstances
- **Reaching marginalized and vulnerable populations:** how the Movement adapted its response to reach the most vulnerable, what new or exacerbated forms of vulnerability resulted from the pandemic, and how the Movement responded
- **Complex emergencies:** the increasing complexity of needs in multi-hazard contexts
- **Preparedness:** relating to the usefulness of existing preparedness tools
- **Data quality, collection and use:** the challenges of data in contexts of disrupted access
- **Misinformation, Lack of Trust and Denial:** how beliefs impact on the uptake of information and implications for Risk Communication and Community Engagement
- **Digital Services and the Digital Divide:** existing and new tools for reaching communities with information and services

Impact on Ways of Working across the Movement

- **Partnerships:** the strength and functionality of partnerships for service delivery, and changes in the funding landscape
- **Learning and Collaboration:** collaboration within and across the Movement, and how effectively the Movement learned from experience
- **Role, Resilience and Sustainability of National Societies:** how the pandemic shifted requirements of National Societies, and the long-term implications

Impact on RCRC Staff and Volunteers

- **Volunteering as a critical role in the Movement:** the impacts of COVID-19 on volunteer roles, recruitment and duty of care
- **Health and wellbeing of staff and volunteers:** mental and physical strains generated by COVID-19 and the Movement's response
- **New ways of working:** the shift to digital, home-based working arrangements, its impacts and the potential implications for the future of work

Strategic Reflections

- **Identity:** the long-term impacts of COVID-19 on how the Movement operates, its core services and the localization agenda
- **Culture:** the mindsets, culture and ways of working that are the foundations of the Movement's effectiveness, unity and impact, particularly in times of crisis.

HOW TO USE THIS AGENDA

“No one planned for COVID-19, and nobody had plans for what 2020 would bring. Therefore we should also not think that we can know what can happen next year. We need to approach all our work with some humility, as to a large extent we are making this up as we go. But I think we have a good sense of principles as an organization, if we keep our values close to our heart, then we will get somewhere where we would like to be.”

– Learning Session Participant

This document sets out an Evaluation and Research Agenda in three parts. The first section covers questions surrounding the impact of COVID-19 on the Movement’s core services and the populations it serves. The second section poses questions around the impact of COVID-19 on the Movement itself – its partnerships, ways of learning and collaborating across the movement, and impacts on the roles and resilience of National Societies. The third section explores the impacts of COVID-19 on Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers and staff, and our ways of working together. Each section sets out a) a set of Evaluation Questions drawn from the thoughts and concerns raised by participants about the Movement’s response to the pandemic, and b) a set of Research Topics that participants identified as areas for most themes that warrant further exploration. The Research Topics are broad thematic areas which would require further elaboration to guide any research efforts.

Finally, the fourth section captures a range of Strategic Reflections that emerged in the learning events. They are more purpose-oriented and serve as topics for future dialogue, reflection and learning to inform the strategy and evolution of the Movement over the coming years.

In Annex, the document includes a Case Study that outlines the methodology used in this COVID-19 Learning Series as a reference for future exercises of this kind.

This document is not a mandate or requirement for evaluation or research across the Movement. Rather, through what one participant termed “a collective brainstorming,” this agenda offers a common framework which may be used in the same way we have learned to approach all of our work in a COVID-19 environment — with flexibility and sensitivity to the needs of the local context, while leveraging the benefits of common goals and a shared experience.

COVID-19 Evaluation and Research Agenda

IMPACT ON THE MOVEMENT'S MISSION AND SERVICES

Core Services: Delivery and Innovation

Participant Voices

What services work, and what services don't work anymore? Is it time to look at new service delivery?³

Quality is an important issue during this COVID-19 period. How do we maintain the quality of the delivery and services we provide? We are building the ship as we are sailing.

Rather than only looking at how response is going in the wide perspective, instead take a deep dive into a specific service. For example, ambulance services.

Evaluation Questions

- How were core services affected during COVID-19? With what impact/lessons learned?
- Were there new services or innovations in service delivery which emerged to respond to COVID-19? If so, what were they and with what impact/lessons learned?
- How have National Societies shifted or adapted their ways of working to address any barriers to service delivery: e.g. structures, skills, partnerships? With what impact/lessons learned?
- How have National Societies ensured service quality for communities in a context of disruption and uncertainty?

Research Topic

⇒ Innovations to improve service delivery in a pandemic

³ The text in italics throughout this document are quotes from participant contributions in the learning series.

Reaching Vulnerable and Marginalized Populations

Participant Voices

We had to do a risk communication and engagement strategy. The communities were able to give us information on how information could reach them. We went to each and every community. They each had their own dynamic on how we could reach them with the messages. The Red Cross was the only one that had this strategy in the country, and it helped the Government and the other NGOs in the country.

How do we do more research on Protection, Gender and Inclusion work in COVID-19? What does it look like?

There were hidden effects of the pandemic in the communities in terms of livelihoods and health that might affect the work we do in Disaster Risk Reduction – we need to learn more about the impact on people.

Evaluation Questions

- How did the Movement take specific measures to ensure vulnerable populations, or populations with complex needs (e.g. informal sector, isolated elderly, returning migrants) were factored into planning and service delivery during Covid-19? With what impact/lessons learned?
- Were there groups that had been included in core services prior to COVID-19 that did not receive the same level of attention as a result of COVID-19? With what impact/lessons learned?

Research Topics

- ⇒ Differential impacts of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations, considering multiple forms of vulnerability, and the implications for service delivery
- ⇒ Methods for inclusion of the most vulnerable and marginalized populations in Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE), planning and service delivery, and Disaster Risk Reduction

Psychosocial Needs and Mental Health

Participant Voices

Because of lockdown, lower income people found themselves without [MHPSS] services.

Planning should include mental health. We can more easily see disease than the psychological matters.

Evaluation Questions

- How did the Movement respond to the impact of COVID-19 on mental health across different communities? With what impact/lessons learned?
- How did COVID-19 affect the access of communities to Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and 'Psychosocial First Aid'? With what impact/lessons learned?

Research Topic

⇒ Long-term psychosocial impacts of the pandemic

Complex Emergencies

Participant Voices

Locations that I work in were already affected by conflict, so we already had access issues. COVID-19 is just restrictions on top of existing restrictions.

COVID has shown us that we are not at the same level. Every region needs to have its own way of working with the response.

We are working in very fragile communities, and we need to focus more on community resilience, on what NS and partners' response can achieve with the resources that they have.

Evaluation Questions

- What has been our COVID-19 response in contexts with protracted crises, where working directly with communities is highly constrained, or not possible? With what impact/lessons learned?
- How has the Movement responded to new emergencies (e.g. wildfires, hurricanes, internal conflict) in the midst of the pandemic? With what impact/lessons learned?

Research Topic

⇒ Pandemic response in contexts of complex, multi-hazard contexts

Preparedness

Participant Voices

We were caught by surprise. A lesson learned: we need clear channels in place before the emergency. In the period when we are all extremely busy and scared, it is very important to have channels already.

In COVID, the dynamics are different. One of the lessons learnt is an enhanced preparedness plan that is dynamic. New information should go back into the plan for current and future outbreaks.

We had to develop a business continuity plan with three difference scenarios and the framework helped us a lot because we had to isolate the key activities that we really had to do

Evaluation Questions

- How did our plans — Contingency and Business Continuity Plans in particular —prepare us, and how did they fail to prepare us for responding to COVID-19? What might this mean for future planning?
- How has the IFRC network ensured a fair and equitable distribution of vaccines to Red Cross and Red Crescent staff, volunteers and high-risk groups?

Data Quality, Collection, and Use

Participant Voices

We learnt how to do monitoring and evaluation when we cannot go to the field. We developed a strategy on how monitoring can be done remotely. COVID really pushed us to do things differently.

To enable better decision-making in "new normal"/unprecedented times, we need to better understand how to connect data/evidence-based decision-making with experience-based decision-making.

How to do monitoring remotely? We must believe in local capacity! Because you have to get it done with distant remote support.

Evaluation Questions

- What have been the challenges in data collection and analysis during COVID-19? How have these challenges been confronted? What does this reveal about the specific requirements for data collection procedures and tools in a pandemic?
- How has data collected in the COVID-19 response impacted operational decision-making?

Research Topics

- ⇒ Remote approaches to data collection to ensure reaching the most vulnerable.
- ⇒ The impact of evidence and experience in operational decision-making

Misinformation, Lack of Trust, and Denial Related to COVID-19

Participant Voices

Volunteers engaged in contact tracing, PSS and other programs say it is worrisome that people in communities say the pandemic is not real, or government is playing politics, so the NS has to map out a strategy for building awareness in communities.

We could use more research on why people are inclined to not believe, and where there are trust issues – the behavioral and belief aspects.

Evaluation Questions

- What has been the impact of Risk Communication and Community Engagement on providing populations with accurate information on COVID-19?

Research Topics

- ⇒ Effective communications strategies to counter misinformation in a public health emergency
- ⇒ Understanding behavioral responses to COVID-19 information and promoting behavior change in pandemics

Digital Services and the Digital Divide

Participant Voices

When we offer services to clients, how much support can we give virtually? Do they actually have access to the tools to receive virtual support from RCRC? Think of an older person at home ill - can they access virtual health support?

In digital questions, we need to think of the uniqueness and context of each NS. How do we customize each template and response to each NS?

It was challenging to give support at the beginning of the pandemic. Communication was tricky and hard. We have been using social media platforms to reach out to communities... we have been making reports, including videos, from a distance. But what is possible to do online and what not?

Evaluation Questions

- How are digital tools and/or remote methods being used to reach communities during COVID-19?

Research Topic

- ⇒ New digital capabilities developed in the pandemic and implications for service delivery, data collection and knowledge management

IMPACT ON WAYS OF WORKING ACROSS THE MOVEMENT

Partnerships

Participant Voices

A change in donor funding priorities when there is an economic downturn -- how are we preparing for that? This can tie into the localization agenda but we need to do the research now.

Collaboration with other agencies; we need a synergistic effect for and with the community, without duplication.

Evaluation Questions

- What has COVID-19 shown about how we best collaborate with non-Movement partners, e.g. WHO, UNHCR, local governments?
- How has operational funding prioritization and allocation affected National Societies during COVID-19? How will this impact on National Society long-term sustainability?

Research Topic

- Changes in donor behavior and aid architecture due to COVID-19 and implications for the future

Learning and Collaboration

Participant Voices

Sometimes it feels like we are on our own, but really in this crisis we are all in this together. This is a worldwide issue: are we locking arms as a worldwide response?

I have worked on more global initiatives with regional colleagues. It has inspired us also to do more global brainstorming as a team.

There were many individual responses carried out by National Societies, with different aims and different implementation, with different data collection tools... and at the end of the year the difficulty is to put all of this together to be able to underline the learning from these experiences.

How to ensure data and information flow across the Movement, having some kind of system in place that reduces transaction costs within National Societies and between partners in terms of information and knowledge management?

Evaluation Questions

- How did the collaboration between the IFRC Secretariat and National Societies affect service delivery during COVID-19? What were the opportunities, gaps and/or challenges?
- Where have we experienced effective learning within and across the RCRC Movement during COVID-19? With what impact/lessons learned?
- How has the collaboration amongst the IFRC Secretariat, National Societies and the ICRC affected the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery, and what lessons can be learned from these experiences?

Role, Resilience, and Sustainability of National Societies

Participant Voices

We have a renewed opportunity to look at how National Societies need to be the center of the work and how this should or could change the role of the IFRC / PNS.

The pandemic provided an opportunity for us to strengthen our auxiliary role within the capacity of the National Society and Government acknowledged this support. There was constant engagement.

How much longer can a National Society be able to cope with these continued waves of C19? What systems need to be put in place to help us adapt and cope for the long-term

Evaluation Questions

- How did COVID-19 affect the roles and functions of National Societies in delivering assistance to communities? How did this impact their role in the localization agenda?
- How has the pandemic affected or changed the auxiliary role of National Societies? What implications may this hold for their future role, functions and sustainability?

IMPACT ON MOVEMENT STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Health and Well-being of Staff and Volunteers

Participant Voices

It is important to engage colleagues in how COVID is impacting them personally, not just how it impacts the work.

It has taught us that we have to pay attention to wellbeing, have back-up systems to deal with exhaustion.

Evaluation Questions

- How has the Movement responded to the mental health strain of being both a service provider and as a workforce that has also been affected by COVID-19, professionally and personally? With what impacts/lessons learned?
- What specific psychosocial support has been available for volunteers and staff? How has this varied across cultures and contexts and with what impact?

New Ways of Working

Participant Voices

There are challenges... but also we've been able to bring colleagues from around the world that before may have not been able to come [to a global conference]. It was amazing to hear colleagues from Nepal, Haiti, Bangladesh..."

Working from home has meant very long days and no life-work division, which do not seem to be fully recognized by management.

Digital and working from home will stay for a long time - how can we prepare as teams for this and take care of each other?

Evaluation Questions

- How has the transition to digital work affected the efficiency and effectiveness of the Movement workforce? What have been the differential impacts for different groups by gender, age, economic roles in household, geographic location and other characteristics?

Research Topic

- ⇒ COVID-19's lasting impact on the world of work, and the implications for the RCRC and National Societies

Volunteering as a Critical Function of the Movement

Evaluation Questions

- How did National Societies provide duty of care to their volunteers during COVID-19 during and outside of working hours? With what impact/lessons learned?
- How has COVID-19 impacted volunteer recruitment and retention?
- How have the roles and engagement of volunteers changed or adapted during COVID-19, and for what reasons? What might be the implications for future operations?

Research Topics

- ⇒ Digital volunteerism
- ⇒ Socioeconomic barriers to volunteering

Participant Voices

"When we had just gone into the lockdown, we had so many volunteers coming out. Many volunteers now are going back to their other work, and there is continuous need... Potential vacuum of volunteers is a discussion that needs to be had: volunteers can be available, but at what moments are they available?"

– Uganda

"If there is a volunteer without income, how can survival income be supported? Especially with COVID, this has become even more clear and important. For example, if volunteers have to pay for petrol... You shouldn't have to be rich to be a volunteer. People may really want to help but need to survive as well."

– Cyprus

"Volunteers are at the center of what we do; very keen to investigate further. Many of the volunteers in the U.K. are elderly... the greatest asset suddenly becomes part of the vulnerable group."

– United Kingdom

"COVID is ongoing whereas cyclones are more cyclical. What is an effective way to support groups of volunteers when doing a disaster response that never finishes? How do we manage volunteer recruitment and retention? We only have a certain number, and we have burnout of volunteers."

– Myanmar

"Volunteers are also citizens and we need to think about this. How can we think of recruitment and reallocation in view of COVID-19. We have many 60+ people working for us. For example, some elderly volunteers were neglecting rules and still helping us: how do we deal with this."

– Belgium

"At the German RC we are doing a study with 10 NS's on resilience in Northern Europe, and how to keep volunteers (retention)... looking at what PSS processes have volunteers and their families being using."

-Germany

STRATEGIC REFLECTIONS

The learning events revealed how the pandemic has given rise to much bigger questions about some of the fundamental assumptions guiding National Societies and the Movement as a whole. There was a common refrain across all the events that ‘things will not go back to how they were’ and participants reflected on how the pandemic may impact on deeper issues such as the Movement’s identity and culture. These reflections do not lend themselves as easily to research and evaluation questions but seem critical to the Movement as it looks ahead to a post-pandemic world and the implications for Strategy 2030. This section sets out a set of questions for strategic reflection that could be rich for cross-Movement dialogues, using some of the methodologies pioneered by Learn to Change in its support of global learning initiatives.

Identity

Participant Voices

In the RCRC, we need to look forward, not to predict the future, but to know what “our house” looks like in the future. More brainstorming spaces are necessary since everyone has great ideas!

I do hope we get to explore the nature of our mission and how that has changed.

We had this discussion in the breakout: is COVID another event, or is it a lens changer? It is a difficult question, but I think, sitting here now – it is a game changer. If we allow it to be, if we grab this opportunity, I think we can make some fundamental differences in the way we work, personally, organizationally, and as a sector to be more agile, responsive, with more learning.

Questions for Reflection & Dialogue

How has the pandemic permanently changed our operating context? Is there a 'new normal' that requires us to revisit the core mission and capabilities of National Societies and the Movement?

As the Movement becomes more virtual and traditional boundaries are redefined, what remains 'national' and what becomes a shared capability across the Movement?

How has COVID-19 impacted the localization agenda? What lessons can we learn to bring this agenda forward?

Culture

Participant Voices

We should explore how we communicate with each other and how to adapt the flows of work. How we keep personal relationships and not only focus on work.

How are we using our learning? More than how we are collecting lessons, how are we acting on them? How does this lead to an organizational systemic change?

There has been a cultural transformation in how we work together. How can we be more agile? How do we remain people-focused?

Questions for Reflection & Dialogue

What have we learned during this period about the mindsets, working culture, and ways of relating with each other that make us more flexible, resilient and successful as a movement?

How do we create a sense of belonging to the Movement in these new circumstances?

What have we learned about learning? Where are the examples of effective spaces for reflection, sharing practices and applying new learning? How can these learning practices be institutionalized?

Annex I: Learn to Change Case Study

COVID-19 LEARNING SERIES: CO-CREATING AN EVALUATION AND RESEARCH AGENDA WITH MOVEMENT STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

As a contribution to the COVID-19 response, the [Learn to Change initiative](#),^[1] in partnership with the PNS PMER Working Group and the Presencing Institute, launched a learning series in October 2020 to generate a framework to align actors across the Movement on a common set of questions for evaluating the response to COVID-19. The initiative aimed to test a new methodology which relied on virtual brainstorming through guided questions. Could an Evaluation & Research Agenda be ‘crowdsourced’ from a cross-section of the Movement? Could a ‘bottom-up’ process produce a robust evaluation and research agenda, and could this serve as a model for co-creating other PMER resources in the future?

This case study outlines the process that was conducted during this period, resulting in the *Emerging Themes from the Movement: Evaluation and Research Agenda*.

The Process

A total of four learning events were held on Oct 27 and Oct 29, 2020, bringing together over 100 staff and volunteers from 63 countries. The process was designed through a partnership between the IFRC Learn to Change initiative and members of the PNS PMER group, with the [Presencing Institute](#), a research and capacity-building organization affiliated with faculty of MIT that specializes in learning and innovation methodologies.^[2] The objective of the learning events was not only to generate a COVID-19 Evaluation and Research Agenda, but to facilitate a space in which participants could reflect without constraints, and with freedom to question, listen, and learn from one another.



The four events were designed to generate and capture reflections from across the Movement that could then be synthesized into a core set of evaluation questions and research topics. The design of the calls (outlined below) proved to be a successful mechanism for generating rich content, and the team found that the results were significant both in the quality of insight and reflections, and in the coherence of the material generated from across such a diverse group. While there was a large amount of data generated through the

calls, it was not difficult to synthesize this into what appears to be a common set of evaluation questions and research topics which could be useful to the Movement.

To launch the initiative invitations were sent through a combination of networks (Learn to Change, PMER, Innovation, Solferino Academy), as well as to other departmental/sectoral distribution lists, asking staff and volunteers to take part in a co-creation process that would result in a common COVID-19 Evaluation and Research Agenda. Participants were asked to register via a Google Form which captured demographic data and the initial expectations of participants for the calls. A Core Team, made up of three members of the IFRC Learn to Change and global PMER team, and three members of the Presencing Institute worked together to design and deliver the process outlined below.^[3]

Learning Methodology and Call Design

The four learning events were held on the Zoom platform over two days, with each of the two-hour sessions held twice in order to cover all time zones.

Calls were designed in a ‘World Café’ format, combining breakout rooms, and group reflection in plenary segments.

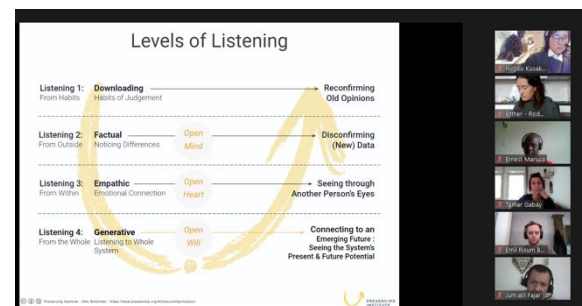
At the beginning of each call, participants were introduced to two of the core learning capabilities of the Learn to Change learning framework – generative listening and generative dialogue. Participants were then guided through three cycles of dialogue in small groups, with different combinations of participants in each cycle, to explore the key questions they are holding in relation to the RCRC Movement’s response to COVID-19.

A first exercise began with two ‘warm-up’ questions to encourage participants to begin practicing listening and dialogue skills and to focus their own thinking.

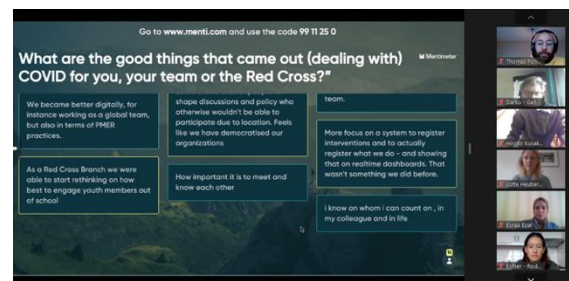
- “What are the good things that came out of (dealing with) COVID-19 for you, your team, or the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement?”
- “What is one thing in your daily work that you have learned from COVID-19 that you would want to share with others?”

Participants input their responses using the online platform Mentimeter, and the facilitators shared their screen over zoom to show a real-time generation of the responses. Maintaining this first step as anonymous allowed participants to warm-up and ready themselves for real-time collaboration which would continue throughout the sessions in the small group breakouts.

Participants were then invited to engage in three rounds of group discussion aimed at harvesting the key questions staff and volunteers are holding in relation to the Movement’s COVID-19 response. Each round was anchored by a distinct question and designed to build on the prior question. The facilitators introduced



LEVELS OF LISTENING, THEORY U



MENTIMETER WARM-UP

the global virtual café method, encouraging participants to arrive at each round of small group discussion, carrying ideas and thoughts generated from their previous discussion. After each round, participants reconvened in plenary, received their question prompt, and were sent into a new breakout group to continue the learning journey.

The first round was designed as a starting point:

- “What are the top 2-3 lessons you have learned through your experience with the COVID19 response so far?”
- How has COVID-19 affected you, your team, the volunteers you engage with and the populations we serve?”

The second round asked:

- What do you feel compelled to explore further around these lessons?
- What areas would you look into?

The third expanded further:

- What additional topics would you want to explore further with new research (what don’t we know yet)?

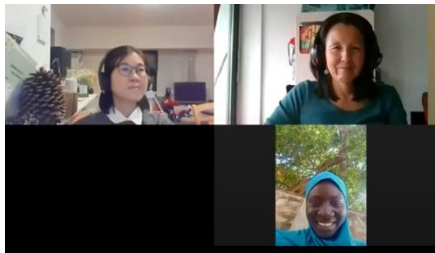
The questions were intentionally framed in broad terms so as to allow participants to bring forward whatever issues were most important to them, without feeling they needed to frame issues in a particular way.

After each round of dialogue participants came back to the plenary and were invited to take a minute of silence to either add to the google document or to sit in quiet reflection. They were then asked to share in plenary (verbally or in chat) any patterns or questions they felt emerged from their time in the discussions.

The calls ended with Learn to Change team members providing the participants with an overview and timeline of where the data would go from these calls – toward analysis, and then report development.

To close the calls, facilitators invited participants to express words of appreciation to each other and for specific contributions. This closing aimed to create a sense that each individual contribution was valued and mattered, and ended the call with a sense that everyone had been listened to and that there was a genuine process of co-creation.

The Learning Journey: Coming Together as a Global Community and Movement



The calls were designed to generate a product, but just as importantly to generate an experience for participants. A key goal of Learn to Change is to create spaces for collective reflection across the Movement, and to support staff and volunteers to learn from each other, and to find ways to apply that learning to improved practice. As was learned in the initial [Learn to Change pilot](#), an ancillary outcome of these learning spaces is the strengthening of a sense of common purpose and mutual support across the

Movement, independent of team or organizational silos, hierarchy or geography. As one participant noted: “there is value in the events themselves; the chance of meeting with people that I would not normally have a chance to talk to.”

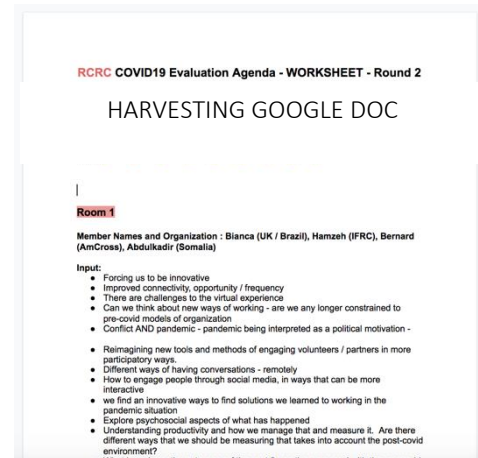
Bringing together such a diverse group of staff and volunteers not only impacted the breadth of data collected but also the participant experience. The participants joined the calls with diverse backgrounds, ranging from technical expertise, volunteers, and staff across levels, including field staff and senior management. PMER, Programmes, National Society Development, Operations, and Innovations all had voices in the sessions. Participants gave their time and energy to “Zoom in” from a variety of situations, including following a recent office raid in one country, to several participants with limited internet, as well as participants juggling caring for children at home, homeschooling or navigating chickens in an outdoor patio. Where participants were not able to use their camera or audio, or if they were unable to join breakout groups, the facilitators were able to integrate their comments via chat. The learning sessions underscored both the new opportunities of digital connection, and also its limitations. Overall, there was a sense that creating these globally connected spaces creates a unifying impact in the Movement.

PARTICIPANT COUNTRIES	
- Lebanon	- Peru
- Uganda	- Myanmar
- Ethiopia	- Somalia
- Cyprus	- Italy
- Indonesia	- Cameroon
- Honduras	- United States
- Italy	- Nigeria
- Tunisia	- United Kingdom
- Iraq	- South Africa
- Croatia	- Panama
- France	- Switzerland
- Philippines	- Hong Kong
- Russia	- Canada
- Norway	- Belgium
- Thailand	
- Malawi	
- Brazil	

Harvesting of Inputs

To harvest the data generated by participants, the calls used shared Google documents as a platform for collaborative development. Each round of data generation involved between five and ten groups of three to four people each. This allowed for a process of data generation on the Google document in which all participants could observe what was being generated, and also served as a mechanism for data capture. This was facilitated by asking each group to appoint a harvester who wrote down the input from their group in their group's allotted space in the shared document.

The approach of holding three rounds of dialogue, with the aim of building on the reflections of each round, appeared to be effective as a method for 'generative learning' – a process through which participants build individual and collective insights through dialogue. Data harvesting occurred via the google document in only the second and third rounds, designed intentionally in order to acclimate participants to the learning process in steps. As noted by one participant, "The rounds of discussion helped me formulate questions, triangulate questions that I have, coalesce around how to better formulate questions."



Data Analysis and Crafting the Evaluation and Research Agenda

The events resulted in a vast amount of raw data, captured from the Google docs, the Mentimeter results, verbal contributions from participants, and the chat functions in the Zoom calls. This material was then reviewed by two researchers who generated an initial set of themes, and then coded the data to these themes. In the first round of coding, the researchers found that there were four distinct types of questions that could be organized in separate categories: questions relating to the core services of the RCRC Movement, questions relating to the internal functioning of the Movement, questions relating to staff and volunteers, and then a set of questions that were much more strategic to the movement but were not necessarily questions and/or topics for evaluation or research.

The themes were then synthesized within these categories, eliminating overlaps, and separating out what were questions of an evaluative nature, and questions that related to longer term issues or areas where participants wanted further information or opportunities for learning. This resulted in the structure of the agenda, which set out a set of Evaluation Questions and a separate set of Research Topics for each theme, and a final set of open questions for Strategic Reflection.

As noted in the introduction to the final document, the resulting Evaluation and Research Agenda is framed as a guideline, not as a requirement, but as a common framework that can serve to align efforts across the Movement.

Challenges and Opportunities for Future Learning

This experiment in co-creating an Evaluation and Research agenda followed one of the key principles of the Learn to Change initiative which is to 'learn by doing'. In this sense the learning series generated its own learning about how to generate learning processes and products with the participation of staff and volunteers from across the Movement. Overall, the team felt that the format and approach met the two key objectives of the exercise. It generated rich data which was felt to be both useful and representative of the learning priorities of Movement staff and volunteers. And it also created a learning opportunity for participants that was not extractive of their knowledge and experience and allowed them to participate in a co-creative process. It also contributed back to their own learning. The team feels that the product is a richer product than would have been generated by a small group of specialists. The team also feels it holds a legitimacy for having been created through a collective process involving such a diverse group of staff and volunteers.

There were several areas where the team found room for improvement in the process or nuance for future replication.

Participant Representation: Although every global region was represented, MENA was underrepresented, and a future process could include additional outreach to ensure opportunity for further engagement.

Composition of the Breakout Rooms: As there is often a sizable difference in numbers in virtual events between those who register and those who attend, pre-assigning participants to zoom rooms based on their reported demographics was not realistic. With this in mind, occasional challenges arose when participants were sent to their breakouts, with some rooms composed of only close colleagues, or others containing a member with technical issues who could benefit from a facilitator's presence. With the size of the sessions and the presence of multiple facilitators, as well as the nimble responses from the lead facilitator in re-assigning or moving participants based on feedback, issues of this sort were mostly resolved.

Data Harvesting Format: Overall, for the purposes and size of these sessions, the team felt the collaborative google document format to be effective and an added resource to the learning journey. However, with additional breakout rooms the google documents would likely have become overwhelmed. In the largest session, harvesters at the bottom of the document reported some frustration from movement of the text resultant from the other breakout rooms' input. Those harvesters took notes separately and copy-pasted into the Google doc upon return to the plenary.

Question Adjustment toward Appreciative Inquiry: The questions used in the Mentimeter exercise were adjusted from the first two sessions. The initial question produced relatively vague responses; the team found that a better result was received with the adjusted question, which used appreciative inquiry to reveal positive adjustments from COVID-19 and create a learning mindset for the discussions.

The COVID-19 Learning Series was felt by the team to be an early proof of concept for the next stage of the Learn to Change program which will be launched in 2021. Learn to Change aims to create spaces for sharing,

harvesting and synthesizing learning from across the Movement, while introducing and practicing the tools of organizational learning. This learning series will be followed with other events and opportunities of this kind to deepen the capacity of the Red Cross Red Crescent to operate as a learning organization, capable of adapting and responding to current and future disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

^[3] The Core Team was comprised of Red Cross Red Crescent staff: Fred Fulton, IFRC Coordinator Learning Systems and Learn to Change Lead; Kristin Helz, Senior Design, Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Advisor, American Red Cross; and Miki Tsukamoto, IFRC Coordinator Monitoring and Evaluation; with Presencing Institute Faculty: Teo Iordache (Lead Faculty), Becky Buell and Emma Paine (Lead Researcher)

