

## MENA

# Locally Led Response (LLR) Community of Practice (CoP)

June 2023

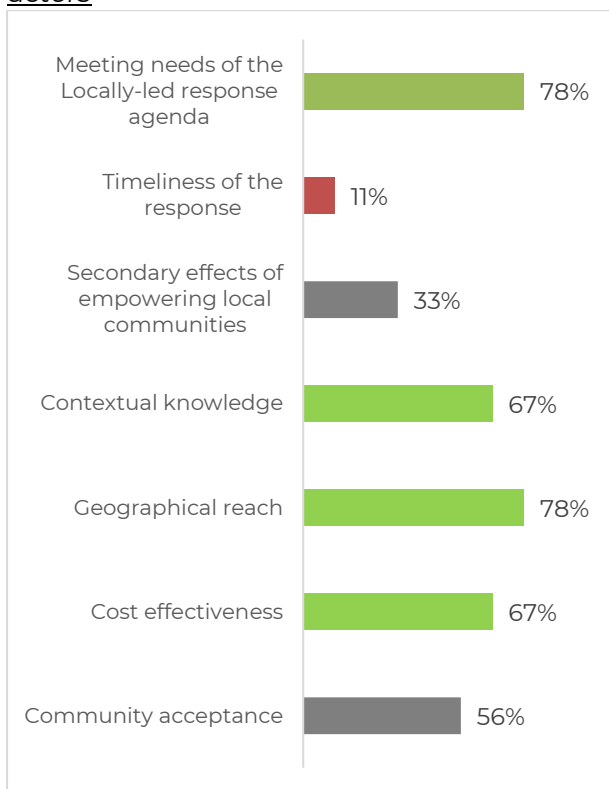
In light of the findings produced by the previous year’s research cycle on LLR in MENA, the CoP made “*identifying and addressing capacity building needs*” a core priority for the group moving forward. The aim is to ensure that local actors are set for success, and fair competitors for grants allocations. Thus, the CoP underwent an assessment of both donors and local actors perceptions on the matter. Notably, this was beyond CVA alone, and intended to cover the perceived gaps to consider local actors as “*fair competitors*” for grants allocations and funding opportunities.

### Methodology

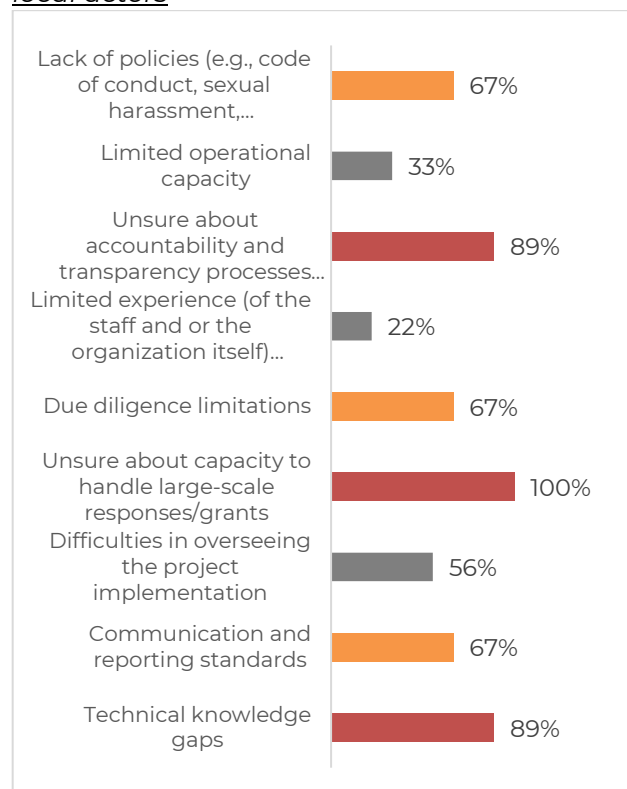
The assessment was structured as two subsequent surveys, one for donors and consortia, aimed to identifying gaps that they perceive or are aware of, and the second for local actors in the form of a checklist, for them to self-assess capacity building needs.<sup>1,2</sup> Across MENA, **twelve responses were recorded amongst donors and consortia, and 97 individual responses were recorded from local actors.** While data are not statistically representative due to the sampling and outreach method, they can surely be considered **indicative.** Data collection ran from May 21<sup>st</sup> to June 2<sup>nd</sup> for the first survey, and then for the checklist between June 6<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

## Donors and consortia’s responses on LLR, gaps and perceptions

### Perceived pros of contracting and funding local actors



### Perceived cons of contracting and funding local actors

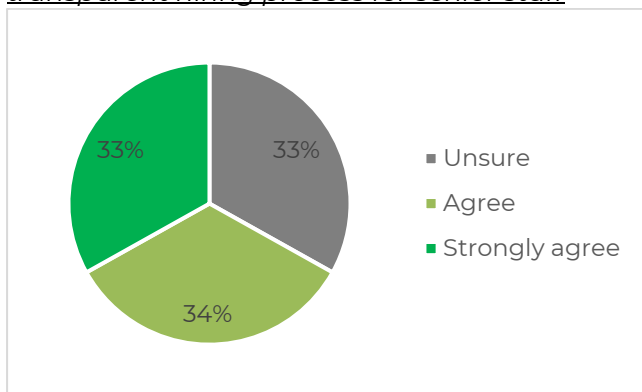


<sup>1</sup> The full questionnaire for donors and consortia is available [here](#).

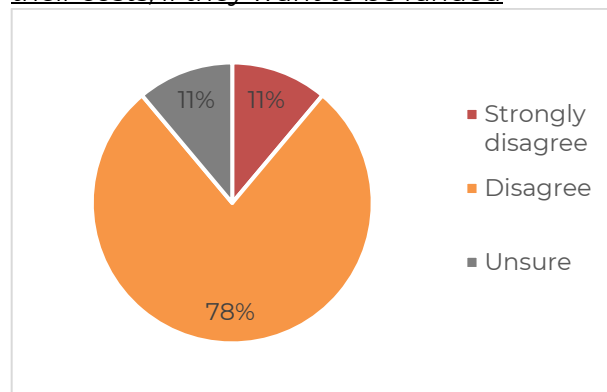
<sup>2</sup> The link to the checklist is available [here](#).

When analyzing the perceived pros and cons of funding local actors, it appears clear that the respondents still had more concerns than arguments in favor. It is widely acknowledged that local actors have better geographical reach, contextual knowledge, and they allow for a better cost-effective implementation of projects and initiatives. However, in spite of often being the first responders during crises, just one respondent argued that they are more “timely” in the response. On the other hand, respondents are still unsure about the local actors’ capacity to handle large-scale grants, their accountability and transparency processes, and their technical knowledge. Furthermore, lack of policies (i.e., code of conduct, sexual harassment policies, whistleblower policies, etc.) and due diligence limitations are considered cons by two thirds of the respondents. One respondent further clarified that their main concerns are related to the risk of instrumentalization of the response, then reiterating the link in this case with data protection, and beneficiary selection processes.

Local actors should have a stricter and more transparent hiring process for senior staff

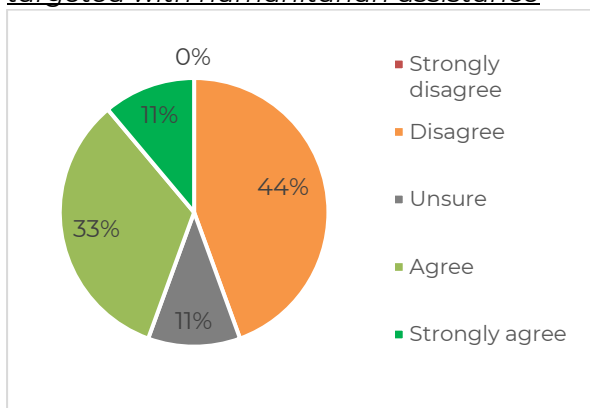


Local actors should try to further decrease their costs, if they want to be funded

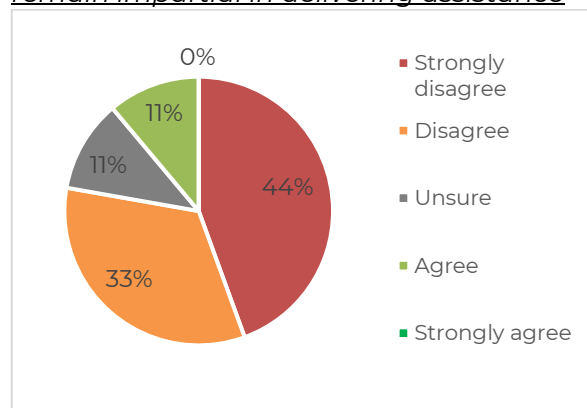


When asking respondents if they agreed or disagreed with a set of statements, it appeared clear that they have concerns around local actors’ transparency of the hiring processes, but they were also reiterating that cost effectiveness is an added value of local actors. However, often these two aspects are connected. Furthermore, **89 percent of respondents indicated that local actors should employ technical advisors to implement CVA programming**, particularly if large-scale, although this would definitely increase their administrative costs and reduce on cost effectiveness. Furthermore, **everyone agreed that, where possible, local actors should request more or longer-term funds to address their capacity building needs**.

Local actors play a pivotal role in identifying who, within affected communities, needs to be targeted with humanitarian assistance



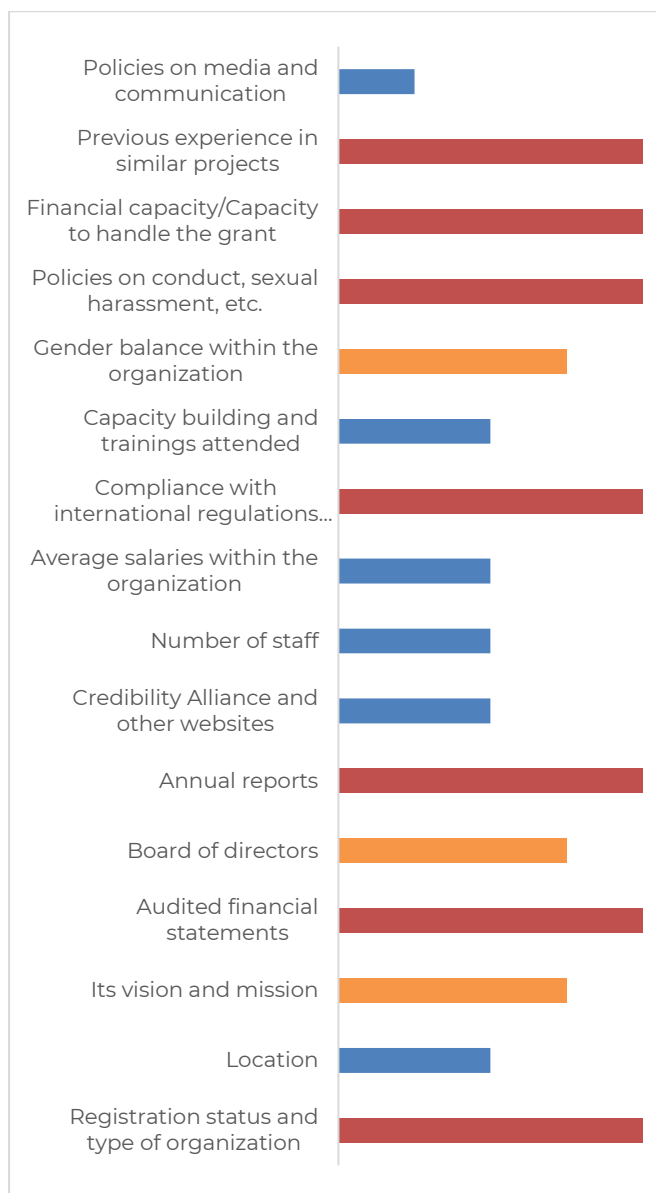
Even where there are community/ethnic/gender related tensions, local actors remain impartial in delivering assistance



When asking about beneficiary caseloads’ identification, the percentage of responses switched entirely from the general question to the protection focused one. When asking about contexts with tensions, respondents were unsure about the impartiality of local actors. One respondent

further clarified that in such contexts best standards for beneficiaries' identification should be blanket assessments coupled with measurable and weighted eligibility criteria.

Due diligence fundamental requirements<sup>3</sup>



Just five out of nine respondents were aware of the details of due diligence requirements. Areas of capacity assessment that are necessary for local actors to cross-check and self-evaluate are thus those presented in red and orange as a matter of priority.

Furthermore, respondents were asked whether **financial reporting, MEAL products, and overall troubleshooting/communication** style of local actors were adequate or should they need improving. Reportedly, **all three need improving**.<sup>4</sup>

Discussing feedbacks, when asked about feedbacks respondents received from local partners, due diligence bureaucratic process length and the consequent delays were the most frequently reported. Yet, one also mentioned receiving feedbacks on budget limitations and its rigidity.

**It was further clarified that there are a lot of procedures, policies, accountability measures, and registration documents that the local partner needs to prepare to be eligible for funding, and oftentimes these are not met.**

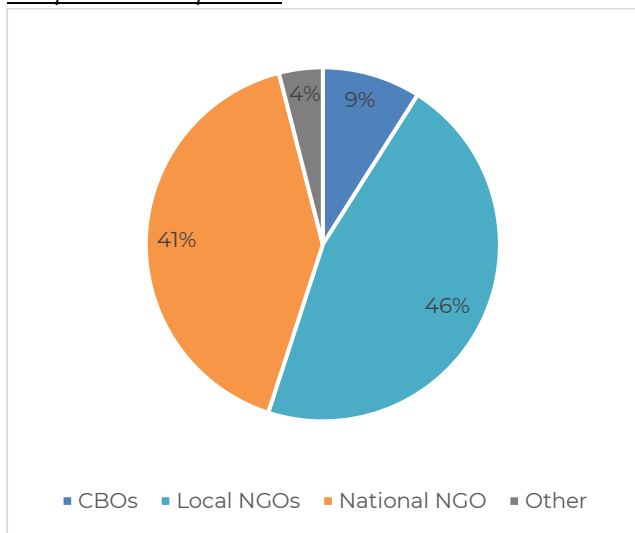
Finally, in case of failed contracts or not successful projects (i.e., operational challenges or troubles/delays in implementation), one third of the respondents reported they would invest in capacity building prior to a second allocation and then evaluate whether re-contracting them a third time. Another third clarified that, unfortunately, in these cases it is hard to be re-contracted in future. The final third chose not to answer.

<sup>3</sup> Findings hereby presented are based on maximum consensus. Answer options were “extremely closely/mandatory”, “very closely, although not mandatory”, “considered”, “not considered”. In the graph, these are represented by numeric values from 5 (“extremely closely”) to 2 (“not considered”).

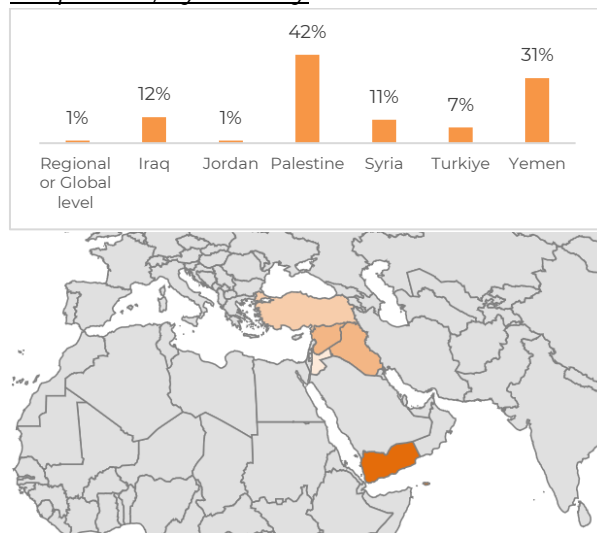
<sup>4</sup> Based on maximum consensus.

## Local actors' responses on core capacity building priorities, beyond CVA

*Respondents' profile*

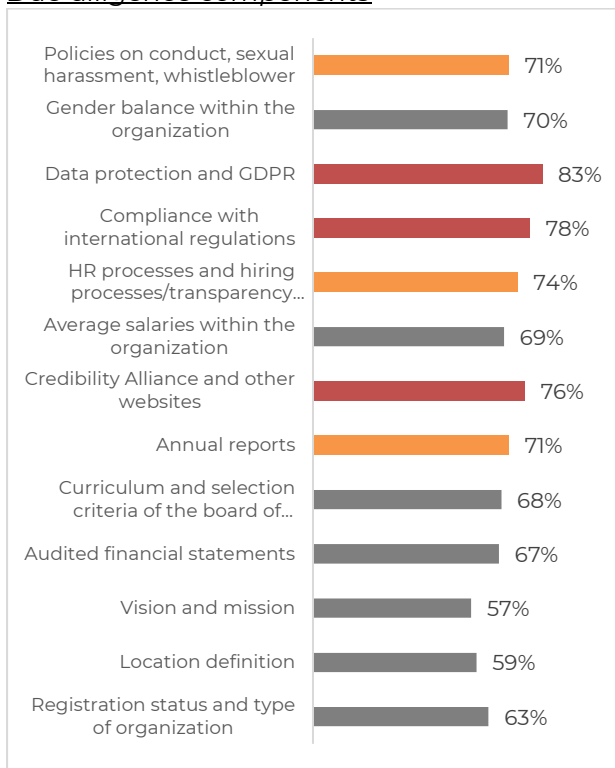


*Responses, by country*

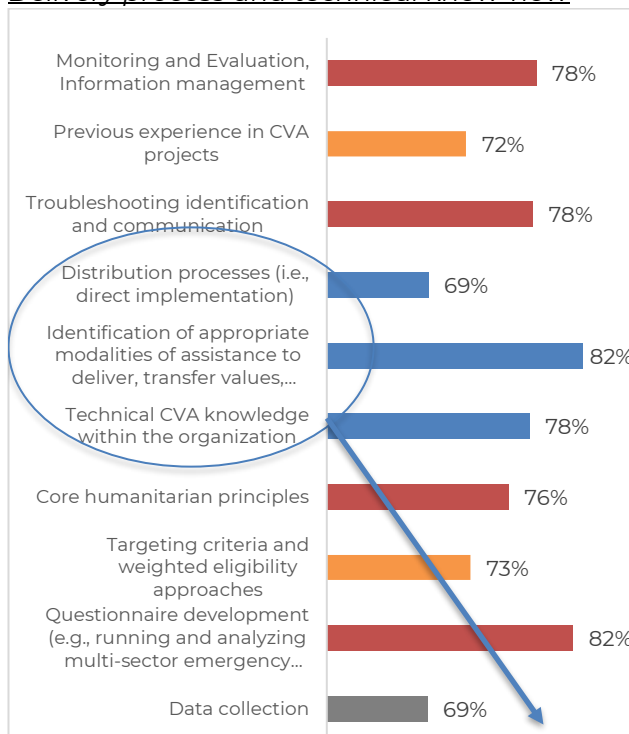


### Reported capacity building needs, by percentage<sup>5,6</sup>

*Due diligence components*



*Delivery process and technical know-how*



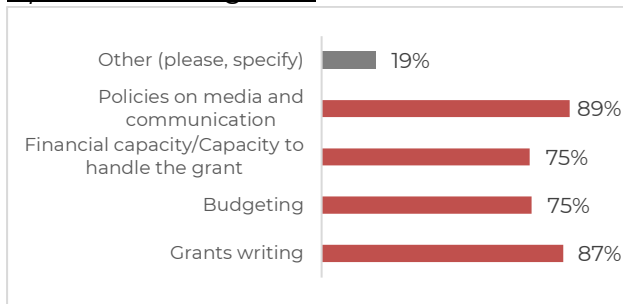
CVA technical knowledge, resources already available in CALP's [Programme Quality Toolbox](#), undergoing a revision and update for relevance.

<sup>5</sup> The calculation is based on real percentage, not absolute ones. This means that the results reported represents the proportion of respondents who clearly indicated a need against the total of sure answers. We removed those who were unsure ( $N \text{ "yes"}/(Total - N \text{ "unsure"})$ ).

Answer options included "yes", "no", "unsure", and "prefer not to answer".

<sup>6</sup> Grey bars are below 70% (disregarded), orange bars are between 71 and 75%, red bars are 76+% (priority)

### Operations and grants



The 19 percent of respondents who reported also having different capacity building needs other than those already included in the checklist reported that their needs may also include, namely: investigations for fraud and drafting of policies and SOPs for CVA distributions processes.

## Next steps

In order to address the most pressing needs for local actors, the CoP will then work to identify organizations or individual consultants, human and financial resources to provide local actors with trainings to bridge these gaps. According to the responses provided, beyond the CVA-related capacity building needs, the most pressing gaps to address are:

1. **Training on communication**, including a) policies on media, external comms, b) websites and credibility alliance, and c) troubleshooting-related communication to donors.
2. **Grants Writing**
3. **Annual reports, audits, and compliance** related courses and resources
4. **Data Protection and GDPR**, including questionnaires development encompassing basic PSS (e.g., data protection, questions selections and appropriate phrasing, etc.)
5. Financial processes and **budgeting**

These first steps will start bridging the perceived or real gaps to allow local actors to become “*fair competitors*” for grants allocations. However, local actors also called for donors to include a condition in their contracts with UN agencies and INGOs to sub-award and/or partner with local actors, the removal of the condition “*if you have previously funded by*”, as that leads to having just few organizations continuously funded and the systematic exclusion of all others, and for investments to address perceived capacity gaps.

Finally, the [Collaborative Cash Delivery \(CCD\) Network](#) is also launching a **Due Diligence and Capacity Assessment Harmonization exercise**.<sup>7</sup> The initial pilots will be held in Ukraine, Türkiye, and North-West Syria, but aim to be further expanded to different contexts. This will ideally then lead to a “*passporting*” approach to reduce time and resources to be dedicated to both due diligence and capacity assessments moving forward.



### Contacts

For further information or should you have resources for this initiative, please reach out to:

#### **Alessia Volpe**

Chair of the CALP MENA LLR CoP and  
CCD Collaboration Manager for the earthquake  
response in Türkiye and Syria (CashCap)  
[volpea@tcd.ie](mailto:volpea@tcd.ie)

#### **Rana Nassar**

CALP MENA Regional Representative  
[Rana.Nassar@calpnetwork.org](mailto:Rana.Nassar@calpnetwork.org)

<sup>7</sup> The pilot is funded by the Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC) for CCD partners that are UK-based.