

Summary: Report on the Learning Needs Assessment for the Global Alliance of Road Safety NGOs

January 2016

Mary Henderson, Consultant

1. Introduction

The Global Alliance of Road Safety NGOs (henceforth referred to as the Alliance) is launching a multi-year capacity-building initiative called the Empowerment Program that aims to advance the road safety agenda by strengthening the capacities of Alliance member NGOs to design, plan, fund, deliver and evaluate effective programs. Ultimately, the Empowerment Program is expected to improve the quality of Alliance members' work to make road safety a priority in all settings, and to save lives.

This summary report presents the key results of the learning needs assessment, conducted by an external consultant, which will help to shape the capacity-building component of the Alliance Empowerment Program. It includes the main findings of an online survey and in-depth interviews and presents recommendations for the development of the training strategy that will serve as the core of the capacity-building program of the initiative.

Nearly half of the membership (48%) of the Global Alliance of Road Safety NGOs responded to the survey; their views and voices will have a direct impact on the design and delivery of the capacity-building activities that are rolled out over the next 3 years. In addition, 17 member NGOs provided more in-depth perspectives on the needs of their organizations and the barriers they face in achieving their program objectives. All of those inputs will be considered as the initiative takes shape and is rolled out over the next 3 years.

2. Key findings

All Alliance members aspire to make meaningful contributions to the road safety agenda. Most NGOs want to have an impact on more than one pillar of the Global Plan, and some want to extend their reach across large geographic areas. At the same time, almost all respondents—both the newer and more established NGOs alike—emphasize the lack of funds to support their program activities.

The survey results and in-depth interviews revealed a wide range of self-assessed strengths and weaknesses, considerable disparity in knowledge about road safety issues and an array of gaps in technical skills needed to deliver effective programs.

2.1 Strengths and weaknesses

Alliance members noted a range of factors and qualities that facilitate or hinder their capacity for delivering their programs. Funding challenges were common to almost all survey respondents and interview participants; this is not included in the table below.

Table 1. NGO self-perceived strengths and weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
Passion, dedication, motivation, commitment	Lack of political will or government support
Technical and organizational skills	Political instability
Committed volunteers	Challenges in influencing government
Participation in road safety networks, conferences, meetings	Lack of a strategic plan
Partnerships – good working relationships with government, civil society, media and private sector	Staff lacking road safety knowledge
Clearly focused agendas	Volunteer staff have other obligations
Diversity of skills within the organization	Lack of evaluation activities to determine what works
Ability to influence others	Dispersed focus (due to skills and/or funding) ¹
Boldness to address difficult issues	Limited national presence
High output, e.g. number of people trained in safe driving techniques or post-crash response, number of school-based education sessions	

2.2 Knowledge about road safety

There are a number of areas where participants in the assessment noted a need for more information and understanding regarding road safety. These include:

- **International standards and laws.** Applicability at national level; SDGs; road safety policies
- **Safe roads.** Infrastructure improvement; road safety management; how to measure/assess the safety of road infrastructure; work zone safety; road audits, black spot identification; needs of different target groups (children, elderly, disabled, etc)

¹ One interview participant noted that it is better to fully develop one activity than to invest in 10 incomplete efforts.

- **Post-crash care.** First aid training for the public and first responders; legal issues (Good Samaritan protections in place in some countries, not all); psychological support; understanding the physics of car crashes
- **Research.** Impact of road safety education on actual road safety improvements; data collection and analysis; management of data from various stakeholders
- **Child safety.** On the roads, in vehicles, etc
- **Behavior Change Communication** for road users; how to make advocacy messages more effective
- **Community mobilization** around road safety
- **Road safety as a system.** What are the key components of that system, and which ones should be targeted by an NGO given current capacities and resources.
- **Media.** How to work with them more effectively on road safety issues and get their buy-in on the importance of these issues

2.3 Specific training needs in technical areas

To be able to deliver their programs more effectively, member NGOs assessed their top 5 training needs as:

- Fundraising
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Planning
- Management
- Reporting

Table 2 presents the rankings of training needs as self-assessed by NGOs that responded to the online survey.

Table 2. Percentage of NGOs with moderate, high or very high needs in specific skill areas

Skill area	Moderate	High	Very high	Rank
Fundraising	8.5	18.3	56.3	1 (83.1%)
M&E	23.9	26.8	16.9	2 (67.6%)
Planning	26.8	22.5	18.3	2 (67.6%)
Management	32.4	14.1	19.7	3 (66.2%)
Reporting	32.4	23.9	7.0	4 (63.3%)
Engagement with govt and legal sys	23.9	19.7	16.9	5 (60.6%)
Public speaking / presentation	19.7	21.1	19.7	6 (60.5%)
Communications / public info	25.4	16.9	15.5	7 (57.7%)
Advocacy	18.3	18.3	19.7	8 (56.3%)
Work with trad'l media*	23.9	16.9	15.5	8 (56.3%)

Using digital media**	22.5	18.3	15.5	8 (56.3%)
Using social media***	25.4	11.3	16.9	9 (53.5%)
Website design and mgmt	23.9	16.9	22.5	10 (36.6%)
Infographics	11.3	28.2	25.4	11 (35.2%)

Notes:

Areas shaded in turquoise indicate responses of 2/3 or more of NGOs.

Rank is based on the total of moderate, high and very high responses.

* Includes TV, radio, newspapers

** Can be read or viewed on a computer

*** Facebook, Twitter, Instagram

Many NGOs indicate an understanding of the link between demonstrated impact and successful fundraising; donors and sponsors are more likely to support NGOs that are having an impact. However, few details were offered about what aspects of planning and management were most important to NGOs.

Survey responses and interviews also revealed gaps in knowledge about road safety and approaches to communication for behavior change, although most Alliance members indicate that educational activities are a key component of their programs.

Engagement with media is another area that NGOs identified as critical to dissemination of messages; support is needed to support greater capacity in this area.

3. Analysis of findings

Analysis of the findings suggest some overarching conclusions:

1) Given the significant challenge of limited resources common to most respondents, there is a need for Alliance members to consider a **narrower focus** (in terms of ‘pillars’ covered in the Global Plan and the main road safety risk areas) and to **expand partnerships** in order to optimize financial and human resources and have a greater impact on road safety in their target areas.

2) Given the diversity of skills and capacities reported by survey respondents and interview participants, the training program must be designed to offer a variety of opportunities and resources, recognizing the need to **invest training resources strategically**; the **importance of regional and cultural relevance**; and the need to **prioritize those skills and activities that have the greatest impact on reducing road traffic fatalities**.

3) Alliance members possess a wide range of capacities to deliver programs; this suggests two important considerations:

- Considerable **‘in-house’ capacity** to deliver the training program, and
- **Differing potential** to benefit from different types and levels of training.

In the interest of strategically investing the resources for this initiative and serving members' needs in the most appropriate and effective way, the **training program should be delivered as a 'cascade' of events and resources**, rather than a series of large, formal training events for all members. Ideally, a core training team should be selected through a transparent, competitive process. It would be composed of NGOs with a demonstrated and documented track record, as well as the key skills required to function as trainers, mentors and advisers. That group would then commit to and be supported to carry out trainings in their regions and sub-regions. All trainings would include a 'training of trainers' (ToT) component to ensure that skills and knowledge could be transferred at increasingly local levels.

Based on their expertise and experience with partners in the road safety community, and with a view to getting the training program underway as quickly as possible, the Alliance management should appoint a lead NGO from its membership, initiate a selection process for the lead training team and support that team to coordinate and implement an initial ToT, establishing the lead training team and getting the capacity-building initiative.

4. Recommendations

The report makes recommendations for consideration by Alliance leadership based on survey results and interviews accompanied by identification of commonalities between NGOs and analysis of perceived strengths and weaknesses against assessment of capacity-building needs. The recommendations are organized into categories covering:

- **General principles** such as creating an ethos of participation in and ownership of the initiative by members, development of 'in-house' training capacity, simplification and standardization of tools, and partnership;
- **Starting points** for the initiative including establishment of a lead training group to ensure maximum participation by members and access to training opportunities, and pre-packaged tools and campaign materials;
- **Evidence as the driver of programs** – there is a need to support more robust use of data and evidence to inform NGO activities;
- **Delivery of trainings** – settings and modes of delivery should reflect logistical and cultural considerations as well as user-friendliness and optimal participation of NGOs;
- **Optimizing resources** through replication of key trainings at the local level, strategic investment in NGOs with greatest potential to benefit from specific training activities, a focus on low- and middle-income countries where road fatality rates are highest, support for NGOs to assess their capacities and set realistic goals, support for more focused programming, development of usable products (funding proposals, press releases, activity reports) as part of training activities, and translation of existing tools and new templates to facilitate use by NGOs for local activities.

4. Conclusion

Capacity building involves many types of training, support and follow-up. The success of the Alliance Empowerment Program will hinge on providing the right types of training and support to the right groups of people, ensuring that systems are in place to offer ongoing guidance and information on topics covered in training; supporting follow-up mentoring and learning exchanges when feasible; monitoring the usefulness of the capacity-building activities to members; and evaluating the overall impact of the initiative for replication or as a case study of good practice.

This assessment serves as the first step in the initiative. Using the findings to plan and roll out a capacity-building program that is responsive to the expressed needs of its membership, and taking into consideration the external analysis of survey responses and interviews, the Alliance will ensure that NGOs dedicated to advancing the road safety agenda are in a stronger position to achieve their goals.