ICVA members have the opportunity to inform findings and recommendations on two important independent reviews over the next month.

1. High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations: announced by the UN Secretary-General in October. The last global review took place over a decade ago. This is an opportunity to examine trends across all peace operations (including special political missions); to ask whether they are fit for purpose in today’s global environment; and to consider how they can be made more effective, efficient and responsive to the needs of local populations. The panel wants to hear NGO perspectives on what we think is working well and what is not working well. More information in the Terms of Reference.

The Panel welcomes written submissions from the humanitarian community to assist development of its thinking. If you would like to contribute to a general, non-attributal submission, send your comments to the ICVA Secretariat who will collect, collate and submit a document. Direct submissions to the panel can be sent to Mike Yuin at the UN. Deadline is Thursday 15 January 2015.

2. Independent Whole-of-System Review on Protection in Humanitarian Crises: The objective of this independent review is “To review the performance of the humanitarian system in achieving protection outcomes, with a view to identifying measures to ensure the centrality of protection in humanitarian action. This includes the humanitarian system’s ability to prevent and respond to violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, inter alia by strengthening the roles of protection clusters and other humanitarian actors, and their strategic and operational interactions with each other and with other key actors.” In combination with field missions, focus group discussions, workshops, and interviews, a survey is also available to all humanitarian personnel. The deadline for completion is 9 January 2015.

3. Over 300 Gather at HC Dialogue on Protection at Sea: In 2014 at least 348,000 people attempted a sea crossing to start a new life in a new country. Several thousand perished in the process. The 10-11 December 2014 High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection at Sea brought together over 300 representatives of governments, UN agencies, NGOs, and experts to discuss possible responses. Their programme included four components:
plenary discussions, thematic breakout sessions, regional sessions, and closing remarks. The NGOs' key messages were echoed throughout and largely incorporated into the High Commissioner's closing address, including their slogan “protection at sea begins with protection on land.” While the spirit of the event was positive, despite some visible discomfort on the part of some governments, it is unclear which concrete actions (if any) will follow. Interested NGOs will hold a teleconference in January 2015 to consider forming a steering group and explore options for the July 2015 UNHCR-NGO Annual Consultations session on protection at sea. For more information, contact Melissa Pitotti. Members can access ICVA’s report on the conference.

4. ICVA Hosts UNHCR-NGO Regional Partnership Consultations in Dakar: ICVA’s West Africa Hub hosted the 9-10 December UNHCR-NGO Regional Partnership Consultations in Dakar, Senegal. This event is part of the roll-out of the High Commissioner’s Structured Dialogue on UNHCR-IFRC-NGO partnership. The event revealed a strong appetite for partnership between UNHCR, INGOs and NNGOs, particularly in the areas of information sharing, complimentary advocacy, capacity strengthening and coordination. One idea for follow-up is the establishment of “Communities of Practice.”

5. States and Civil Society Endorse Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action: A 2-3 December Ministerial Meeting in Brazil charted a 10-year plan of action to strengthen protection across Latin America and the Caribbean. The meeting brought together delegates from more than 30 governments and 150 civil society and other organisations to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration. Of particular interest was the focus on regional cooperation to respond to new forms of displacement, such as that caused by growing gang violence in Central American countries. States also committed to eradicate statelessness by 2024. ICVA thanks its members who were involved in organising the event (NRC) and contributing to its preparations (Asylum Access Ecuador).

6. UNHCR Donors Pledge $500.8m for 2015: On December 9 UNHCR’s donors met in Geneva and announced their initial 2015 funding contributions to UNHCR. They pledged $413m that day, plus another $87.7 million pledged prior to the conference -- which amounts to $500.8m total. This falls short of last year’s pledging meeting results ($671.6m) and amounts to only 8% of UNHCR’s $6.23b appeal. UNHCR’s reliance on voluntary contributions and perennial uncertainty regarding funding levels has implications for its programming, including for NGOs implementing projects. See the list of the donors and their pledge levels, UNHCR’s report on the conference.

7. Building a Community of Practice for Urban Refugees: Held in Bangkok on 2-4 December, the joint UNHCR-APRRN-ICVA workshop aimed at identifying good practices to improve urban protection and programming. Panel discussions offered practical strategies that are currently implemented within the Asia region that strengthen community-based protection, expand protection space, improve access to national systems, and promote sustainable livelihood development for urban refugees. For further information, check out the Urban Refugee Learning Programme.

Humanitarian Coordination

8. Recruitment for ERC- Many of you sprang into action with news of a new appointment to the ERC position. NRC took a lead role in drafting a letter and ICVA worked with InterAction to galvanise 85 NGOs to sign onto a letter to the UN Secretary General regarding the criteria and process for appointment to this hugely critical position. The final letter was delivered on 10 December.

9. IASC Principals meeting 9 December: ICVA was represented at this meeting by Board Chair Penny Lawrence, Vice Chair Faizal Perdaus, and Executive Director, Nan Buzard. Agenda items included:

- Challenges of the politicisation of aid, and how civil society could
take stronger role in pushing for change.
- Lessons learned around the triggers and deactivation of L3s and the need for better understanding
- Humanitarian challenges of urbanisation.
- IASC Review

The minutes will be shared with you in due course and members can read the key background documents, and the ICVA summary of the meeting.

10. IASC EDG Donor Meeting December 4: A group of donors have been meeting with the EDG every six months for the past 18 months – the focus to date has been on the Transformative Agenda though going forward it is shifting to a broader humanitarian agenda. The group met again on the 4 December in Geneva. Some of the key take-aways were:

- Transformative Agenda: Donors appreciate the good work on the TA but would like to see more collective responsibility and the HCT members more accountable. Increased NGO engagement continues to be frustrated with some of the process, in particular those relating to the UN as a funding parner. There is interest in exploring capacity expansion of the system and seeking better engagement of and support to frontline actors.
- More discussion with donors and partners is required around flexible risk sharing and transparency.
- Refugee Coordination Model. Some donors will “accept” a separate refugee chapter, but want one document that will show all vulnerabilities in a country. Defining mixed situations seems to be a challenging point. There is good progress for refugee issues to be more prominent on the HCT.
- UNMEER. Overall sense of dis-satisfaction, but also recognition by donors of reduced funding and UN agencies not being proactive. Discussion focussed on how to make sure this is not precedent.

11. ICVA Review of NGO Perceptions to L3: ICVA commissioned a review of NGO perceptions on L3. The final report will be out in early January, but in the meantime please you can read the preliminary findings. This was presented by ICVA to both the EDG and Principals meeting. Thank you to all our members who contributed to this.

Humanitarian Financing

12. OCHA Considers New Fund for NGOs, Particularly National NGOs: In large-scale emergencies in locations without Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs), like the Philippines and Iraq, OCHA has not been able to directly fund NGOs. To address this gap OCHA is considering establishing a Global Fund (or “Facility”) particularly for national NGOs. It is also considering regionally managed funds and/or standby CBPFs in all OCHA country offices. While there is clearly a need for more funding that is directly accessible to NGOs, donors and NGOs recently posed several questions regarding the potential management of such funds and how they would fit into the bigger humanitarian financing landscape. Members can read OCHA’s discussion paper on funding options, and ICVA’s report on feedback given during the 15 December meeting of the OCHA-NGO Platform on CBPFs and key takeaways of the 16 December meeting of the Pooled Fund Working Group. OCHA’s discussion paper on funding options will be revised over the next three months to take into account feedback received.

13. OCHA to Issue Harmonised Global Guidelines for Country-Based Pooled Funds: On 11 December OCHA released package of documents related to its new harmonised Global Guidelines for CBPFs, including a cover letter, policy instruction, and an Operational Handbook. At the 15 December Platform meeting, NGOs raised concerns about the high number of NGOs deemed ineligible for consideration in early adopters of the Guidelines (Somalia and Afghanistan), heavy capacity assessments, options for partner capacity development, inequity between the treatment of UN agencies vs. NGOs, the size of grants, and plans for the roll-out. At the 16 December PFWG meeting, UN agencies raised concerns about UNDP’s role
as managing agent of 4 CHFs, overhead, and the role of clusters. Despite such concerns, these guidelines will soon be endorsed by ERC Valerie Amos, and come into force in January 2015. Members can read ICVA’s reports on feedback given during the 15 December meeting of the OCHA-NGO Platform on Country-Based Pooled Funds and 16 December meeting of the Pooled Fund Working Group.

14. OCHA Launches $16.4 Billion Global Appeal for the 2015: In Geneva on 8 December OCHA launched the global humanitarian appeal for 2015 asking for US$ 16.4 billion to assist 57.5 million people. Journalist Lyse Doucet facilitated a panel featuring ERC Amos, HC Guterres, and others. The Global Humanitarian Overview outlines the financial requirements to support people where there are Strategic Response Plans (SRPs) in Afghanistan, CAR, DRC, Iraq, Myanmar, occupied Palestinian territory, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen. It also includes the regional impact of crises in Syria, South Sudan CAR. In February the appeals for nine Sahel countries and Djibouti will be added.

15. CERF Donors Pledge $418.6 Million at Pledging Conference: In New York on 17 December UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon delivered opening remarks at the annual pledging conference for the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). He asked donors to “dig deep” and fund the CERF, saying it is fast, reliable and saves lives. In light of the fact that CERF is only directly accessible to UN agencies, several donors, (Canada, Denmark, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland), called for more timely onward disbursements to implementing NGOs. Some also urged more complementarity with Country-Based Pooled Funds, which are supposed to be directly accessible to NGOs. Almost all speakers thanked ERC Valerie Amos for her service in light of her planned departure from post in Spring 2015. The total amount the pledged, $418.6 million, is impressively close to CERF’s annual $450 million target. A consultant is currently reviewing options to review/ expand the CERF, particularly in light of HC Guterres’ repeated call for a “super CERF.”

16. CHF Evaluation-Stakeholder Survey Common Humanitarian Funds (CHF): The triennial Global Evaluation of the Common Humanitarian Funds is currently ongoing. The evaluation will provide an independent assessment of the Common Humanitarian Fund mechanism, as well as support to its conceptual development in the areas of risk management and resilience. As a part of the evaluation process, the independent consulting company, KonTerra, has launched a global survey of the CHF stakeholders, including international and local NGOs, UN agencies, and donors. The survey will play a vital role in ensuring relevance, accuracy and credibility of findings, and ultimately the usefulness of the evaluation. You can complete the Survey, in either French or English; responses are confidential and only seen by members of the evaluation team. Deadline for completion is 21 December.

17. Game Changers: Creating a more open and adaptive humanitarian response: ICVA participated in the Montreux XIII donor conference from 1-2 December, at which heads of several major international humanitarian organisations as well as senior officials from peace-building, development and the private sector met to explore ‘game changers’ in humanitarian aid, to develop radical and innovative ideas for changing the way the sector works, all to better save lives and protect livelihoods.

A discussion paper “Responding to changing needs?”, commissioned from ALNAP especially for this retreat, outlines four distinct models of humanitarian responses- Comprehensive, Constrained, Cooperative, and the Consultative. A PowerPoint by Alnap’s Director John Mitchell outlines the findings of their paper. Unsurprisingly, identifying new big “game changers” was much harder than agreeing the challenges. Members can read the ICVA key takeaways of this meeting.

New and Noteworthy

18. Handbook on access in situations of armed conflict: developed under an initiative of the Government of Switzerland with support from Conflict Dynamics, this handbook on the international normative framework on humanitarian access, serves as a reference and to enhance access to civilian populations in need.
19. **OCHA online Documents**: two recent publications focus on the Security Council's normative practice on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (PoC).

- **Security Council Aide Memoire for the Consideration of Issues Pertaining to the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict** includes examples of thematic and country-specific resolutions that were adopted by the Council between 2010-2013.

### Upcoming Events

**2015**

- **13 January**: ICVA Humanitarian Financing Working Group Meeting
- **15 January**: NGO Follow-Up Meeting on Protection at Sea
- **19 January**: SCHR Conference Humanitarian action in 2025: what future ahead of us?
- **20 January**: ICVA UNHCR Working Group Meeting
- **21-22 January**: IASC Humanitarian Financing Task Team Retreat, Geneva, Switzerland

**9 March**: ICVA 2015 Annual Conference

**10 March**: ICVA 16th General Assembly

**1-3 July**: UNHCR NGO Annual Consultations 201

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Season’s Greetings and with good wishes for the New Year!

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