2015 Progress Report: Asia Regional Hub

Dr James Munn & Jessica Darby
ACKNOWLEGMENTS

ICVA is grateful to its supportive membership, Board and partners for dues, other contributions and many types of in kind support.

ICVA thanks the following governments and organisations for their generous support:
  Australia Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
  Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations’ International Development Fund
  Ministry of Foreign Affairs Denmark
  European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO)
  German Humanitarian Assistance
  Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
  Sweden Ministry of Foreign Affairs
  Swiss agency for Development and Cooperation
  United Nations High Commission for Refuges’ (UNHCR)
  US Department of State, Bureau of Population and Migration (PRM)
Forced Displacement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>ICVA will:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NGOs strengthen protection, assistance and durable solutions for refugees, IDPs, stateless persons and vulnerable migrants.</td>
<td>Support collective NGO advocacy by facilitating statements, positions and action on critical issues pertaining to forced displacement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improve institutional engagement between NGOs and organizations such as UNHCR by facilitating partnership initiatives and consultations to better serve displaced persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Influence practice on the ground by promoting improved understanding of and synergy between global policies and operational realities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As waves of refugees flooded Europe’s borders throughout 2015, world leaders have only now begun to fully appreciate the human impact of four years of conflict in Syria, yet the humanitarian community has long struggled to cope with what has become the worst humanitarian crisis in the decades. As appeals remain underfunded, programs in other parts of the world are being cut, limiting the scope of humanitarian response to other refugee crises in other regions.

In the Asia Pacific, the ongoing plight of the Rohingya minority of Myanmar remained one of the most significant flash points throughout the year, as the discovery of human trafficking camps in the jungles of Thailand and Malaysia grabbed headlines in May.

With the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal serving as a major transportation route for human trafficking and maritime migration, protection at sea remains especially critical for humanitarian response, both regionally and globally.

The ICVA network in action

At the beginning of the year, the ICVA Asia team travelled to Myanmar and met with 18 ICVA members and 41 partners to exchange information on the current status of IDPs and refugees along the Thai-Myanmar border and potential concerns about planning for repatriation in 2015. The mission also provided an opportunity to engage with UNHCR’s Myanmar Country Office on in-country and cross-border planning as a follow up to the High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection at Sea held in Geneva at the end of 2014. Our discussions in Myanmar highlighted the importance of strengthening partnerships to improve humanitarian action as a key issue for the Asia Hub to further promote at a regional and global level.

In May 2015, human traffickers abandoned several ships carrying Rohingya and Bangladeshi migrants in the Bay of Bengal, while the governments of Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia denied the people stranded at sea access to their territories and failed to immediately conduct search and rescue operations. As the situation quickly escalated to a humanitarian crisis, the ICVA Asia Hub coordinated with Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network, Action Aid, Oxfam International, and World Vision to draft a joint NGO statement as part of an advocacy campaign aimed at influencing governments in the region to take action during the intergovernmental Special Meeting on Irregular Migration in the Indian Ocean hosted by the Royal Thai Government on 29 May 2015. An overwhelming number of NGO voices supported the statement, with 85 signatories representing over 600 non-governmental and civil society organisations operating across the Asia-Pacific region.

Following issues of mixed maritime migration has long been an important common interest for NGOs operating in the South East Asia region. Throughout the year, the Asia Regional Representative facilitated NGOs’ institutional engagement by providing regular updates on maritime migration trends and exploring policy options through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee at a regional level, as well as through formal and informal task teams aimed at addressing the gaps within maritime monitoring.
and response mechanisms in the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal.

In August of this year, the Asia Hub joined ICVA member COAST in Bangladesh on a field mission to Cox’s Bazar to meet with climate-displaced refugees. Since the 1991 cyclone that struck low-lying Kutubdia Island located in the Bay of Bengal, the former residents of the island have struggled to rebuild their community on the mainland in Cox’s Bazar.

In two separate meetings, the ICVA Asia team consulted over 50 women and men, who as community leaders represent a population of 160,000 people affected by displacement, and heard directly from the affected community about the insecurities and challenges they face as the Bangladeshi government plans to uproot them once again, forcing this community to cope with multiple forms of displacement. Along with Rohingyas fleeing discrimination and violence in Myanmar, this community of Bangladeshis also constitutes the population most susceptible to departing on perilous journeys by boat to Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia, which provided the Asia team an opportunity to gain direct insight into the overlapping political and humanitarian variables within the context of human trafficking.

During a meeting of the sub-committee for humanitarian emergencies of the Bangladesh Humanitarian Coordination Country Team (HCCT), the ICVA Asia Representative was invited to present on the uneven implementation of the proposals and recommendations put forward at the “29 May 2015 Bangkok Special Meeting on Irregular Migration in the Indian Ocean.” In light of the vast support from civil society for the ICVA-led regional advocacy campaign during the May/June Bay of Bengal crisis, Bangladesh HCCT members expressed solidarity for further joint advocacy in the lead up to the high-level intergovernmental follow-up meeting scheduled for late 2015.

Following our field mission in Bangladesh, the Asia Hub most recently supported our host and a key member in the region Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network in drafting the “APRRN Statement on Maritime Movements in the Indian Ocean,” which followed from ICVA’s Joint Statement on Irregular migration in the Bay of Bengal in May. Many Bangladeshi civil society organisations who endorsed the Joint Statement in May were also included in the dissemination of the October APRRN statement in continuation of our regional advocacy campaign.

Throughout 2015, ICVA Asia has persistently coordinated initiatives in response to maritime migration on both a global policy and regional field-based level by fostering links between national and international NGOs, NGO networks, UN agencies, regional organisations, and other stakeholders to collectively influence governments in the region to fulfill their obligation to rescue and protect refugees and migrants at sea.

Engaging with UNHCR

Established in 1962 as a forum for international collaboration to address the needs of refugees, ICVA has a long history of harnessing the power of collective advocacy to promote change. From the beginning, ICVA has played an active role in shaping the evolution of refugee protection and to this day, promoting effective institutional engagement with UNHCR remains one of ICVA’s most important functions.

At the global level, ICVA’s leadership creates a platform for raising NGO voices to influence UNHCR’s policies and practices. First, ICVA coordinates NGO statements to UNHCR’s governing bodies – both the Executive Committee and its Standing Committee – which offers the opportunity for NGO engagement at the highest level of decision-making. Second, ICVA co-hosts
the UNHCR-NGO Annual Consultations held in Geneva every summer, which this year brought together over 500 representatives from around the world, representing both national and international NGOs, UN and international organizations from 86 different countries.

At the end of 2011 the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, called for a review of the quality of partnership between UNHCR, IFRC and NGOs. Since the launch of the High Commissioner’s Structured Dialogue (SD) on partnership with NGOs and the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, ICVA has convened three country field missions in cooperation with InterAction and UNHCR in Pakistan, DRC, and Kenya to facilitate open dialogue and feedback between UNHCR and NGOs at the country level. In addition, ICVA also organized two regional consultations in Bangkok (2013) and Dakar (2014) aimed at evaluating the state of UNHCR-NGO partnerships in the regions and identifying actions to support more effective partnerships.

Building on the discussions from previous Structured Dialogue consultations on UNHCR-IFRC-NGO partnership, the ICVA Asia Hub hosted the second Regional Structured Dialogue consultation in Asia in late September 2015. The SD workshop was attended by 37 participants, including national and international NGOs from 8 different countries, national and regional NGO networks, and UNHCR representatives from the Regional Office (5) and the Thailand Country Office (1). The objective of the SD was to promote mutual respect and trust through open communication, transparency in decision making, and clear accountabilities between UNHCR and NGO partners.

In addition to the meeting on UNHCR-NGO partnership, ICVA also convened a Dialogue on Protection at Sea and Statelessness in Asia focusing on:

- Improving understanding about coordination among NGOs working on the cross-cutting issues associated with maritime migration and stateless in Southeast Asia;
- Analysing challenges and exchanging best practices on protection at sea; and
- Developing an NGO network on Statelessness to collaborate with UNHCR regional and country offices in Asia.

Forty-two NGO representatives participated in the day-long symposium emphasising regional collaboration with UNHCR country offices and civil society. This platform stimulated a great opportunity for participants to share ideas, experiences and challenges while also contributing to potential concrete solutions to advance advocacy in the two areas of forced displacement, which will feed into a regional statement for ICVA members in December 2015 UNHCR Dialogue on Root Causes. A number of recommendations were made, including the role of ASEAN.

After several consultations at the regional and country-level, the most common feedback ICVA received from NGOs is the need for more communication and dialogue with UNHCR country offices on the state of partnerships within the operational context. To that end, the ICVA Asia Hub and UNHCR Country office in Myanmar organised a two-day Structured Dialogue on 8 – 9 December 2015 to further evaluate the state of UNHCR-NGO partnerships in Myanmar and to identify practical actions for further partnership strengthening and complementarity. The two-day meeting concentrated on specific operational contexts by exploring the socio-political complexities in Rakhine as well as issues of protection, peacebuilding and conflict resolution in the south east of Myanmar, including preparations and expectations regarding returnees from Thailand.
“Our goal for the Structured Dialogue is to take the Principles of Partnership from aspiration to operation in UNHCR-NGO partnerships.”

Humanitarian Partnerships

**Objective**

NGOs provide leadership in principled humanitarian policy and practice, working in effective partnership with other key humanitarian actors.

**ICVA will:**

- Advocate for policies that ensure better partnerships approaches for NGOs by engaging in policy development to strengthen partnership approaches in humanitarian work.

- Support strong NGO partnerships based on the Principles of Partnership by providing platforms for improving NGO partnerships, with particular attention to national NGO capacity support amongst NGOs, UN agencies, and other stakeholders.

- Promote learning and dialogue on humanitarian principles and quality and accountability to foster a humanitarian system with affected populations at the core.

---

### Principles of Partnership

- **Equality**
- **Transparency**
- **Results-oriented approach**
- **Responsibility**
- **Complementarity**

“Significant partner agreements should be based in Principles of Partnership, which creates a common ground and a reference point to building strong relationships.”
The humanitarian landscape has shifted quite dramatically in recent years. There is a growing recognition of the vital role of local and national organisations in emergency response and preparedness, while the emergence of new actors, such as the military and private sector, has presented challenges as well as opportunities for adapting humanitarian action to include more diverse types of strategic partnerships.

As a global network with diverse membership, ICVA aims to create platforms for increased collaboration and coordination between NGOs and other humanitarian actors. By harnessing the unique skills and expertise of its members, ICVA strives to make policy debates as operationally relevant and inclusive as possible in order to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response in practice.

From principles to practice

Since the initial endorsement of the Principles of Partnership (PoP) by the Global Humanitarian Platform in 2007, the dialogue has moved towards understanding how humanitarian organisations could operationalize the PoP in practice within a diversity of humanitarian contexts. Over the past seven years, a wide range of consultations and reviews were undertaken, highlighting the challenges and opportunities in their usage.

Given the importance of local actors as first responders highlighted in recent operational reviews of humanitarian response during Typhoon Haiyan, which devastated the Philippines in November 2013, this year ICVA Asia convened a dialogue on “Applying the Principles of Partnership in the Philippines” to evaluate concrete examples of how the PoP have been implemented in partnerships in the field. Four types of partnership were discussed and analysed: NGO partnerships with communities, NGO partnerships with the private sector, UN-NGO partnerships, and partnerships between national and international NGOs.

A key advocacy position made by NGOs in the Philippines to the international community was the importance of working with local actors, who are there before an emergency occurs and will continue to be there long after the response has phased down. **Locals are the community**, so they can be significantly more responsive to the community’s needs. Thus, NGOs must take on a coordinating role by bridging the gap of how the community works with different stakeholders to

![Image](image-url)
support access to the humanitarian system – building resilience through community-level dialogues that encourage participation.

#ICVAPoP campaign

In the lead up to the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), the ICVA network is calling on all humanitarian organisations to support the Principles of Partnership by contributing how humanitarian actors apply these principles within their partnerships and programs. ICVA invites all humanitarians to:

1. Sign up to the PoP by sending an email to principlesofpartnership@icvanetwork.org
2. Provide video testimonials answering:
   a. What do the Principles of Partnership mean to me? or
   b. A statement on “As a humanitarian, the most valued Principle of Partnership is xxxx because of xxxx”
3. Tweet the hashtag #ICVAPoP on WHS and partnership related messages

In August 2015, ICVA-member COAST invited the Asia Hub to co-host a learning event in Dhaka, Bangladesh on the Principles of Partnership: Learning and Way Forward, which was attended by over 50 organizations, almost all of whom participated in the local and national consultations in Bangladesh for the Central and South Asia Consultations for the World Humanitarian Summit. The press release from the symposium was featured in seven media outlets and highlighted the importance of upholding the PoP within the humanitarian and development community of Bangladesh.

Fostering a community of accountability

ICVA’s mission is to make humanitarian response more principled and effective. To that end, ICVA regularly brings together humanitarian practitioners to critically analyse collective practices around the quality of services and accountability to affected populations.

Religious values and doctrines have an important role to play for many faith-based organisations (FBOs) as a moral compass for humanitarian action, yet finding a balance between purely humanitarian aid and interest of religious propagation or political agenda remains a challenge for many FBOs. In this context, the ICVA Regional Representative, ICRC and the Humanitarian Forum Indonesia hosted a two-day training and dialogue on 2-3 September 2015 on the Humanitarian Principles and Faith-based NGOs in Bogor, Indonesia. The workshop aimed to:

• Create links between humanitarian practitioners from faith-based organisations in Indonesia responding to crises in the same areas;
• Provide a platform for diverse actors to better understand their common humanitarian values, working principles, and the Codes of Conduct;
• Identify common challenges and potential stumbling blocks to further engagement, as well as explore how these obstacles could be overcome; and
• Explore how to translate humanitarian principles into practice by integrating HP into operational decision-making

The discussions offered organisations of different faiths an opportunity to deepen their mutual respect and understanding of the commonalities shared by different humanitarian actors.
Humanitarian Coordination

**Objective**

NGOs actively influence and engage in humanitarian coordination mechanisms to ensure they are inclusive, contextualised and provide effective assistance and protection of those affected by crisis.

**ICVA will:**

- Influence global humanitarian policy on coordination and leadership particularly through the IASC
- Influence inter-agency coordination mechanisms at country and regional levels by monitoring coordination activities, and providing constructive analysis and advocacy on NGO participation, particularly by national NGOs
- Enhance NGO coordination by supporting regional and country-based NGO coordination bodies through peer-support mechanisms, and analyzing and disseminating best practice and relevant resources

Over the course of the last 15 years, the Asia Pacific region has been affected by natural disasters more than anywhere else in the world. In fact, OCHA reports that “88 percent of all people affected worldwide by natural disasters reside here in the region. A key anxiety felt by many humanitarian responders in countries throughout the region is preparing for and anticipating the “big one”; and in a region with natural hazards ranging from floods, droughts, tropical storms, tsunamis, volcanoes, and earthquakes, there is little doubt that a “big one” will occur – it is only a matter of when.

**Promoting an inclusive approach**

While national NGOs play a vital role in frontline operations of humanitarian response, there is a marked absence of national NGO representation within the decision-making leadership of international coordination mechanisms. In response to this disparity, ICVA hosted a symposium in November 2014 to strengthen the role of National NGOs on HCTs, which brought together 14 national NGOs to explore opportunities and challenges for engaging in HCTs. Participants expressed that the ideal HCT would be grounded in equality among its representation, in which equal partnership between the NNGOs and INGOs would translate into equity in values and decision-making. As a network of diverse membership, ICVA continually promotes inclusive NGO influence within humanitarian coordination mechanisms and advocates for policies that reflect this value.

Following the symposium, in a series of meetings during the Asia Hub’s mission to Myanmar in January 2015, the Asia Regional Representative discussed potential linkages for improving collaboration with regard to the HCT in Myanmar with INGO and NNGO partners. Similarly, meetings with UN agencies also provided opportunities for advocating for the HCT to improve its strategic decision-making by tackling the imbalances in representation.

After years of joint advocacy and support, the Asia Hub is pleased to announce that the Myanmar HCT has recently restructured its representation to include a national NGO focal point to represent the pluralistic perspectives of local Myanmar NGOs. We applaud this move and look forward to continuing to support an inclusive approach to humanitarian coordination.

**Advancing a community of practice**

This year marked the launch of ICVA’s NGO Coordination Resource Centre, an online tool for consolidating relevant and practical resources to improve NGO coordination. The NGOCR provides:
• Guidance in establishing and managing coordination bodies
• Support to NGO coordination bodies to engage in broader humanitarian mechanisms (HCTs, clusters, and sector working groups)
• A dedicated section for networking and learning, including a Community of Practice, a growing list of coordination bodies, trainings, and vacancies

Through this site, ICVA aims to help improve humanitarian preparedness and response by increasing the effectiveness of NGO coordination in humanitarian contexts and their links with other humanitarian coordination mechanisms.

Following the success of the first regional meeting of NGO Coordination Consortia held in September 2014, the Asia Hub was excited to bring together 19 organisations representing national, regional, and international NGO coordination bodies from 11 different countries in the Asia Pacific region in October 2015.

This year’s dialogue provided opportunities for exchanging concrete strategies on improving humanitarian coordination and fostering links among diverse NGO coordination fora and international coordination mechanisms as a way of strengthening the community of practice within the region.
Humanitarian Financing

**Objective**

Humanitarian financing meets the needs of populations affected by crises, and NGOs - particularly national NGOs - understand, influence, and have better access to humanitarian financing

**ICVA will:**

- Influence policy to strengthen financing mechanisms by promoting NGO engagement on IASC finance platforms and other funding mechanisms
- Improve NGO access to funding through research, analysis, and tracking of NGO experiences (particularly national NGOs) in accessing humanitarian funding and by promoting best practice
- Improve NGO understanding of humanitarian financing mechanisms by providing guidance and learning opportunities for NGOs to better resource humanitarian action

In 2015 the humanitarian system was faced with the challenges of responding to increasingly complex and daunting crises while coping with shrinking budgets and a growing funding gap. Without substantial reform to the “one size fits all” approach to humanitarian financing, aid will inevitably fall short of meeting the needs of affected populations.

As a member of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), ICVA co-chairs both the IASC’s Humanitarian Financing Task Team and the OCHA-NGO Platform on Country-based Pooled Funds and is also a member of the Pooled Fund Working Group. Through these platforms, ICVA strives to influence humanitarian financing policy by providing analyses and opportunities for improving NGO understanding of financing mechanisms while facilitating NGO feedback on experiences and operational realities to promote a system that is more responsive to the needs of affected populations.

**Improving NGO access**

As part of a three-day workshop in Bangkok in September 2015, which brought together various international and national NGOs with UNHCR, IFRC and IOM, the ICVA Asia Hub convened a peer-to-peer learning event held on the third day to build on the extensive and diverse knowledge from 34 representatives of INGOs, NNGOs, and ICRC coming from different countries and regions. The aim of this event was to identify innovative solutions to raise funding for collective regional advocacy on Protection at Sea and Statelessness. It also offered an opportunity to stimulate further engagement from NGOs into the humanitarian financing architecture in line with ICVA strategy, supported by the German Government – represented at the initiative – to increase the understanding of humanitarian financing mechanisms.
International Council of Voluntary Agencies

Geneva Office
26-28 Avenue Giuseppe Motta 1202 - Geneva - Switzerland
Tel: +41 (0)22 950 9600 - Fax: +41 (0)22 950 9609
Email: secretariat@icvanetwork.org
www.icvanetwork.org
@ICVAnetwork

Regional Hubs

Asia
Bangkok, Thailand

MENA
Amman, Jordan

West Africa
Dakar, Senegal