CASE STUDY #4

Country level NGO Coordination Platforms

How ICVA co-created a new NGO coordination platform for the Rohingya Response in Bangladesh

Overview

There is a long history of violence and oppression towards the Rohingya people in Bangladesh that has resulted in many displacements over the years. In August 2017 there was a sudden upsurge in violence in Myanmar resulting in over 500,000 people being forcibly displaced into the Cox’s Bazar region of Bangladesh during the following months. There was a massive humanitarian response and need for better coordination. At the request of ICVA members and partners engaged in the response, ICVA’s Regional Representative for Asia conducted a mission to Dhaka and Cox’s Bazar Bangladesh and continued to provide ongoing support for the establishment of a new NGO platform to coordinate humanitarian response.

Details

Initially the aim was for ICVA to support coordination in the short-term by using its networks and influence to connect NGOs to the overall coordination structure. Following the initial ICVA visit in October 2017, ICVA supported structured engagement between the various actors. ICVA then collaborated with others to establish a functional NGO forum comprising both INGOs and NNGOs and could ensure NGO engagement at operational and strategic levels in the response. With the platform in place, ICVA has continued to advocate for the role of a locally-led, sustainable and protection-centered approach by NGOs in what will clearly be a protracted refugee response context.

In terms of role, ICVA was primarily a convener of discussion and a broker of relationships, staying out of the day-to-day details. They were able to link global processes to the ground in real time as well as provide practical value supporting the development of TORs, job descriptions and strategies. The Danish Refugee Council was the lead agency in negotiating the funding arrangement with ECHO for the NGO platform. The COAST Trust assisted in brokering relationships with the national NGO community and critical support was received from UN agencies (particularly OCHA and UNHCR) throughout.

Some key milestones in the process included:

- Oct 2017: High level meeting for NGOs with the ERC during early stages of response
- Oct 2017: Inclusion of NGO Liaison Unit within the ISCG structure for first six months
- Oct 2017: Inclusion of NGOs in the Strategic Executive Group (at Dhaka level)
- Feb 2018: Agreement to establish NGO platform
- Feb-Oct 2018: Successful negotiation on participation by national NGOs in the platform
- Feb-Oct 2018: Development of NGO platform TORs and interim steering committee
- Oct-Nov 2018: Participation in Coordination Review Mission

As a result of the collaborative effort the new NGO platform for Rohingya response is now well established, with a central role in all coordination mechanisms and an effective governance structure in place for accountability.

ICVA members/partners consulted when planning mission: COAST Trust, Oxfam, Plan, WWI, BRAC, UN OCHA, UN RC Office