Meeting: ICVA - States Briefing on NGO Covid-19 response

Date: 24 April 2020

Presenters: Azmat Khan (Chief Executive Officer, Foundation for Rural Development), Clémence Caraux-Pelletan (Director, INGO Forum in the Democratic Republic of the Congo), Emmanuelle Osmond (Head of Humanitarian Coordination, ICVA), Jeremy Rempel (Head of Humanitarian Financing, ICVA)

Facilitator: Ignacio Packer (Executive Director, ICVA)

Ignacio Packer
- ICVA’s engagement: as per the ICVA statement, localisation, the Nexus, shrinking space, diversity, accountability are important issues in the discussion around Covid-19 and reflect the engagement ICVA has been involved in.

Clémence Caraux-Pelletan

DRC: Situation overview & NGO coordinated efforts
- Addendum to the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP): Before Covid-19 hit the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the HRP targeted 15.6 million people in need. With support from sectoral clusters and the NGO community, OCHA has since issued an addendum to the HRP in order to integrate the Covid-19 impact on existing humanitarian needs, which now targets 19.5 million people in need.
- Situation overview: In parallel to Covid-19, the situation is worsening in the DRC and the humanitarian's capacity to respond is reduced as well. High level of violence and massacres – especially in the North-East – natural disasters and ensuing displacements, a worsening security situation as manifested by an increased number of kidnappings of humanitarian workers and ethnic tensions all obstruct humanitarians from having little to access and hence to provide humanitarian assistance.
- Ebola epidemic: Throughout the first months of 2020, the number of cases recorded had declined dramatically. However, just days before the outbreak was expected to be declared over, new cases were confirmed, thus demonstrating that the outbreak is not yet over and there is still need for continued vigilance.
- In-country Covid-19 response: the epicentre is located in the capital Kinshasa. The problem is that the situation is not clear and information incomplete as not many tests have been done and local medical treatment capacities are either not really working or not existing, particularly outside of capital.
- INGO forum: composed of 110 INGO members, it is working on establishing a common perspective and bringing forth common issues and messages. Currently, it is very active in analysing the impact of Covid-19 on its members, their capacity to continue their programming and capacity to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic. Some members have left the country due to concerns about appropriate duty of care, those who stayed are concentrating on development work by adapting their response, others are trying to scale up to respond to Covid-19. Humanitarian assistance in DRC is usually focused on rural areas where armed groups are located and where epidemics such as measles are reported. Covid-19 is impacting urban areas more.

→ The INGO forum is concerned about the continuity of work of its members as lack of financial resilience to the shock is manifesting itself.
Types of support needed: i) need to take into account the lessons learned from the Ebola response in terms of stronger community engagement, stronger and better coordination of humanitarian leadership, possible involvement of police and armed forces; ii) need to avoid Covid-19 business (as was the case with Ebola business); iii) need to advocate for regular humanitarian airlift to allow for transportation of equipment and qualified personnel which are needed to scale up activities.

Azmat Khan
Pakistan: Situation overview & NGO coordinated efforts

• Covid-19 cases: Currently, there are about 13’000 cases confirmed, with more than 280 deaths. Circa 130’000 have been tested overall.
• Situation overview: Pakistan is facing a unique set of humanitarian challenges. Inter-communal violence and clashes between the military and non-state armed groups have displaced over a million people and created recurring insecurity. Prone to natural disasters, an emergency situation was declared recently due to drought and with the monsoon season coming up, flooding will be another issue of concern. Further, Pakistan hosts a large number of refugees, with about 1 million coming from Afghanistan, and many documented and undocumented migrants.
  → Recently, Pakistan fell out of the formal cluster system. Alongside the Covid-19 response, this complicates the situation further and there will be a significant increase in humanitarian needs.
• Role played by NGOs in Pakistan in influencing the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP): Initially, Pakistan was not included. Once included, the process was inclusive and led by the National Humanitarian Platform. Initially, the needs identified were rather large, however, they reduced them to critical needs only once they coordinated with both UN and INGO colleagues, reducing the requested amount from 800 million to 116 million dollars.
• Types of support needed for national and local NGOs: Local NGOs have been very pro-active, taking the lead to help the government and supporting at the provincial level. It is important to underline that Covid-19 response is a local response and needs to be responded locally. While INGOs provide the “hardware” (PPEs, larger resources, etc.), local actors can play the role of social collaterals. Thus, if funding goes directly to local actors, the response will be more direct and efficient.
  → On 30 March, ICVA issued a paper on Localization in the Covid-19 Global Humanitarian Response, to support dialogue on strengthening principled and effective humanitarian action by NGOs during the Covid-19 response, with a focus on reinforcing local and national action wherever possible.

Emmanuelle Osmond
GHRP review process & the recognition of the crucial role of the NGOs at the global level, both in preparedness and response

• Challenges NGO face in country: The challenges Clémence and Azmat stated are common across different countries as NGOs try to stay and deliver but are faced with various challenges, such as new restrictions being imposed by governments to stop the spread of Covid-19. 4 are the main challenges: i) staffing issues due to difficulty to enter, travel within and getting staff out of the country and visa concerns; ii) access issues iii) issues related to centralised assistance, logistics and supplies at global level; iii) issue of cash flow due to the difficulty to get cash into the country.
• Challenge of bringing operational concerns to the global discussions: These challenges are raised twice a week at the Principals and EDG level, which focus both on the global situation of Covid-19 but also on country-specific issues.
  → GHRP challenges discussed in the EDG: i) logistics challenge; ii) supplies, procurements and setting up hubs, transit of NGO staff in and out of countries; iii) MEDEVAC aspects. Duty of care aspect should be included as well.
Jeremy Rempel

NGO key humanitarian financing concerns to enable adequate response to Covid-19

- 5 main NGO humanitarian financing concerns: i) need to both fund the ask of the GHRP and to ensure no diversion of funds. Rather, it is important to add on to ensure a coherent response to Covid-19 and to maintain current operations in order not to exacerbate vulnerabilities; ii) flexible funding measures. It is important to identify new and existing ways in which funding can be flexible to enable humanitarian actors to respond as directly as possible; iii) need to support the full diversity of humanitarian actors, in particular national and local actors. Most direct channels of funding need to be prioritised; iii) logistics. Need to ensure fully funding the core central efforts to provide logistics for the overall response; iv) long-term thinking is needed as well. Currently, Covid-19 impact is a dual health and impeding financial crisis which could affect funding streams. Hence, there is a need to put together correct approach to continue funding.

- Funding perspectives 2021: Is there a need for different narratives? The Covid-19 response is truly a global response, thus we should not to consider it country-by-country which would increase vulnerabilities. The global response should also include ensuring long-term funding in both donor countries and recipient countries. Consequently, messaging needs to be globally as well.

- Achievements of the NGO collective in the last 3 months: In this response, there have been less confrontational issues between UN agencies, donors and NGOs and more spirit of collaboration. Ongoing initiatives have been linked to the Covid-19 response. For example, the Humanitarian Financing Results Group have taken the lead for flexible funding and the ongoing work on the quality funding, reporting and transparency has led to a better linkage between the Grand Bargain and the Covid-19 response.

Q&A, interventions

Q1. Information is essential, and we need to be using it to advance forward-looking planning. How can we best transition to joint strategy conversations?

Q2. Thanks for these interesting presentations. Would be great to hear more about the work on updating the GHRP. How do you expect NGOs will be reflected in the new iteration, including in terms of budget? Could you elaborate on how NGOs are engaged at country level in developing the new iteration of the GHRP? Are local NGOs sufficiently involved?

Q3. How can we ensure that all the efforts we put together towards GRF is still a key area to follow up in this critical moment and be able to collaboratively advocate for demonstration of GRF/ GCR commitments and pledges?

Q4. How are INGO jointly with local NGOs organizing in specific country settings to engage in negotiations to get access and movement restrictions lifted? Through NGO consortia, HCT, ...? Could we possibly receive from ICVA and NGO partners a kind of list of contexts/settings particularly challenging in this regard?

Emmanuelle Osmond: There is a timeline set for the next iteration of GRHP. While the first was more top bottom, this one is bottom up. As a result, the first inputs are collected at the country-level. NGOs can input at country level, also through NGO consortia (until 25 April). There is still chance to comment at a later stage. This is to show that NGOs are involved. Messages were sent to the HCs, Heads of OCHA and IASC Principals about the pivotal role of NGOs in the response and preparedness and in the preparation of the GHRP.
Jeremy Rempel: Budget revision of GHRP is important as it helps to identify a global target and the share between actors. The updated version should be more built on country level input and should involve national partners participation. At the global level, there is a need for a more realistic division of resources between partners and for funding to go as directly as possible to partners, in particular national and local, such as through pooled funds. Regarding data (particularly financial) there is a need to improve understanding of financial flows. OCHA FTS has started some initial work to better map flows, but the accuracy and usefulness of FTS depends on all partners to commit to timely update of data.

Azmat Khan: The GHRP process is UN-lead and there is short time to input. As a result, NGOs are trying to work jointly with all the other actors to ensure that funding is going smoothly to local NGOs. This is an opportunity for everyone to come together and to advocate for humanitarian space.

ICVA ED closed the meeting by thanking all the participants for their contribution. ICVA will continue to facilitate the dialog between its members and States on the response to Covid-19 and similar events might be organised again in the future.