This impact evaluation refers to ICVA's 2015-2018 strategy. The report is structured to align with how ICVA worked in practice, while staying true to the selected focus areas: Forced Displacement, Humanitarian Partnerships, Humanitarian Financing, Humanitarian Coordination. The methodology comprised interviews and document reviews, also drawing from interim impact studies conducted previously. The main findings are presented under the main work areas used to frame the key evaluation questions.

Increasing NGO understanding of the humanitarian sector and its policies

ICVA’s initiatives to build NGO understanding included publications and briefings, learning streams, digital communications, conferences and meetings. The initiatives have covered a wide range of topics considered a priority in the sector, such as the Grand Bargain, the Global Compact on Refugees, localisation, shrinking space for civil society, sexual exploitation and abuse, humanitarian financing, quality standards, the Nexus, and ‘The New Way of Working’.

ICVA’s work in building understanding of NGOs has been well aligned with the strategy, has moved with the time, and is widely utilised and appreciated. Reaching greater numbers of small, less well-resourced NGOs, located in places closer to humanitarian crises continues to be a challenge. While ICVA has clearly reached many people, it is difficult to know the degree to which ICVA’s work has built organisation-wide understanding or just the understanding of a limited number of interested engaged people in any given organisation.

Increasing NGO engagement in policy & advocacy in key issues related to ICVA’s focus areas

ICVA has stimulated NGO engagement, utilising its links to core processes in which it has a coordination role, its standing presence in inter-agency bodies (e.g. the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)) and through its focus on specific priority initiatives. This approach has ensured that the ‘engagement’ has always had a purpose, rather than access, or presence for the sake of it.

ICVA’s engagement work combines a systematic backbone anchored in its long-term link with the UN and other international platforms with more time-bound engagement on priority issues and processes. Over the period, ICVA has had considerable success in facilitating engagement for a diverse range of NGOs and in linking networks with networks. High calibre staff are perceived by peers to have been key to the network’s successes. ICVA’s links with and efforts to include organisations located in countries affected by crisis (compared with other networks) is recognised, and ICVA is clear to say it aspires to do more in this area. Regional hubs have been ‘force-multipliers’ for engagement and still have potential to go further. Throughout the 2015-2018 period ICVA has continued to diversify the range of global, regional and national actors and influencers they engage with. This is positive, while at the same time represents a potential risk of ICVA spreading its limited resources too thinly and/or diluting impact.
Influencing key debates and policies related to ICVA’s focus areas

The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) appears to have had a profound impact on ICVA’s work and standing in the sector. ICVA was involved from planning through to shaping the outcomes of the WHS and has been heavily involved in a number of the main follow-up workstreams.

While it is difficult to precisely describe the impact of ICVA’s influence work, considering the evidence, it is reasonable to conclude that a number of opportunities and messages may not have happened with the same quality, had ICVA not existed. ICVA has been collaborative in its approach, with its role shifting between being an analyser, coordinator, convener and trusted broker.

Connecting policies and practices through the strengthening of field-level NGO fora

Encouraging and supporting coordination among NGOs has been part of ICVA’s priorities throughout the period but it ramped up in July 2017, when ICVA began implementing a two-year programme funded by DG ECHO of the European Commission. The project is aimed at increasing capacity and impact of in-country NGO fora.

ICVA’s approach of being a global resource for best practice, enabling cross-learning regionally and direct support have been complementary. Focus on this work seems justified and consistent with the post-WHS trends towards localisation. The ECHO contract in 2017 and 2018 was key in taking this work to the current scale and continuation of funding will be key for continuation; especially if there is a desire to increase direct support along the lines of the Bangladesh example, potentially requiring significant internal capacity.

Full Report

The full report includes case studies and detailed findings. It is available at: https://www.icvanetwork.org/system/files versions/ICVA_ImpactStudy_Report2019.pdf

The conclusion includes specific recommendations related to future monitoring & evaluation (M&E) as well as suggestions of topics for medium-term reflections. The ICVA Secretariat response to the recommendations can be read in a letter addressed to the ICVA Board.