

COLLECTIVE ADVOCACY ON FAMINE PREVENTION – ICVA OPEN LETTER

ICVA CASE STUDY #2

Short summary of the case study:

The combined impacts of conflict, climate change and inequality, coupled with the COVID-19 crisis, have led to an acute food insecurity situation around the world. Responding to this need has become a shared priority of many NGOs, the UN system and donors. Recognising the importance of raising a collective voice from Civil Society on this critical issue, in March-April ICVA and our members and CSO partners joined together in a call to States and their leaders to take action through an [Open Letter](#). More than 300 NGOs and NGO networks at global, regional and country level have signed this letter, which was released to media and emailed to States and UN leadership on 20 April 2021.

Timeline of the initiative:

January – June 2021, ongoing follow up

ICVA's role and influence:

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A group of ICVA members mobilised to develop a media and communications campaign around the letter, pooling their expertise to deliver a collective, distributed campaign. Through these and other efforts, the letter received extensive media coverage with more than 330 times across 56 countries and in multiple languages. Many ICVA members issued complementary press releases or linked the letter to their own campaigns. On social media collective efforts resulted in more than 9,000 mentions of the #FightFamine hashtag throughout April, in social media posts shared by over 5,000 unique users.

How the process and outcome reflected ICVA's priorities, and related to the Theory of Change:

The process reflected the power of ICVA as a network, in that it was an initiative led by the secretariat but driven largely by the active engagement of ICVA members in Geneva and globally. This demonstrated the convening power of ICVA and our ability to influence members, partners and beyond at the highest levels. A core group of ICVA member Advocacy and Communications focal points drove the development of the letter and the campaign of outreach to communicate the letter widely after it was signed off. The Secretariat provided coordination and leadership of the process, and together these efforts helped us all achieve such great outreach.

How the work has influenced the humanitarian sector:

It is very difficult to measure impact of this type of work, but some examples:

- Recognition of the initiative by a representative of FCDO, who highlighted that the fact the letter was discussed in British media (particularly the Daily Mail) in the critical days ahead of the G7 Famine Compact being announced had helped to raise these issues at political levels in the UK.
- Continued engagement on the topic of famine prevention and meeting needs, particularly through a reinvigorated discussion at the IASC Results Group 3 which carried forward the interagency collaboration.
- NGOs were encouraged to continue to build on this Open Letter in their own advocacy efforts, at national and global levels, to draw urgent attention to the scale of human suffering due to acute food shortages and other unmet needs.

What has been the positive impact so far?

ICVA members want to work together. They have taken forward collective advocacy on famine and hunger based on the good relationships fostered during this experience. Further, they have developed other letters and are working more closely, both independently and with the support of ICVA, to develop harmonised messaging and advocacy.

What could be further improved?

ICVA is not an advocacy organisation and cannot sustain this level of engagement, so we are very reliant on our members to lead and commit to such initiatives. ICVA is best placed to amplify these efforts but not necessarily to drive these ourselves.

The way forward – some recommendations:

Invest in the ICVA Secretariat in support to collective NGO advocacy.