



A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK  
FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE  
HUMANITARIAN ACTION

## **ICVA STATUTES**

Approved by  
the 18<sup>th</sup> ICVA General  
Assembly Geneva,  
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**ICVA'S VISION**

The vision of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies is a world in which crisis-affected populations are effectively protected, assisted, and enabled to rebuild their lives and livelihoods with dignity.

**ICVA'S MISSION*****ICVA – A Global NGO Network for Humanitarian Action***

The International Council of Voluntary Agencies is a global network of non-governmental organisations whose mission is to make humanitarian action more principled and effective by working collectively and independently to influence policy and practice.

# ICVA STATUTES

## PART A: THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF VOLUNTARY AGENCIES

### **Article I. Name and Description**

#### **a) Name, Legal Character, and Location**

The International Council of Voluntary Agencies (hereinafter referred to as ICVA) is a network of non-governmental voluntary agencies (hereinafter referred to as non-governmental organisations – NGOs), constituted as an association under Swiss Law on 6 March 1962 and having its seat in Geneva, Switzerland. ICVA was established as the successor organisation of the Conference on Non-Governmental Organizations interested in Migration, the Standing Conference for Voluntary Agencies Working for Refugees, and the International Committee for World Refugee Year.

#### **b) Operating Principles**

ICVA is a non-partisan, not-for-profit, and politically independent organisation. ICVA is a signatory of the *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations in Disaster Relief* and adheres to related humanitarian standards and codes.

#### **c) Structure**

ICVA has the following structure:

- i. a General Assembly of member organisations (hereinafter referred to as the “General Assembly”) whose competence is defined in Article VIII of these Statutes;
- ii. a Board;
- iii. a Secretariat; and
- iv. other *ad hoc* or standing bodies as are decided upon under the authority of the present Statutes.

#### **d) Vision**

The vision of ICVA is a world in which crisis-affected populations are effectively protected, assisted, and enabled to rebuild their lives and livelihoods with dignity.

#### **e) Mission**

##### ***ICVA – A Global NGO Network for Humanitarian Action***

The International Council of Voluntary Agencies is a global network of non-governmental organisations whose mission is to make humanitarian action more principled and effective by working collectively and independently to influence policy and practice.

#### **f) Objectives**

The objectives of ICVA are:

- i. to provide a global forum for consultation and cooperation among ICVA members on issues of common interest regarding humanitarian action;
- ii. to support and strengthen the role of ICVA members in humanitarian action with a view to enabling them to take informed decisions and improve the quality of their work;

- iii.
- iv. to exchange and analyse information; influence and develop policy; and carry out advocacy that reflects and represents the views of ICVA members;
- v. to facilitate coordination and promote partnership among ICVA members across all regions of the world;
- vi. to engage in dialogue and interact with organisations and actors that have a role in, and/or whose work impacts, humanitarian action; and
- vii. to ensure the views of NGOs are heard concerning humanitarian action and policy.

**g) Resources**

ICVA shall obtain the funds necessary for its work from membership fees, contributions, donations, and grants which it may receive, provided that these are not subject to conditions which are contrary to the aims and principles of the organisation.



**PART B: ICVA MEMBERSHIP**

**Article II. Membership Criteria**

There shall be three categories of organisation eligible to become members of ICVA:

- a) International voluntary agencies or international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) whose operations extend outside their country of origin. This category also includes families or federations of NGOs that share a common name, but that have chapters or operations in different countries;
- b) Consortia, networks, and groups of different NGOs that have joined together to enhance the effectiveness of their work. Such groups may represent NGOs from one or more countries, or they may be regional or global in scope; and
- c) National voluntary agencies or national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that operate only within their organisation’s country of origin, and have demonstrated a commitment to translating their work to the international level; or have specific expertise that will assist ICVA in achieving its mission.

In addition to the above, the Board shall decide upon *due diligence processes for new and continuing membership* of ICVA and will approve new members. Once approved for membership, each member agency will confirm in writing the person(s) that will act as its representative(s) to ICVA.

**Article III. Observer Status in ICVA**

An NGO that wishes to participate in the ICVA network but which, because of constitutional constraints or reasons of principle, cannot be associated with the views and/or positions adopted by ICVA, may apply for Observer status.

**Article IV. Affiliate Membership in ICVA**

The ICVA Affiliate membership category is for academic and research institutes that have existing activities of a human rights/humanitarian nature or existing activities of benefit to NGOs. Affiliate membership provides a means to make better links between their work and the work of ICVA members.

## **Article V. Independence of Member Organisations**

Member organisations retain their independence, including the right of withdrawal from ICVA.

For the purpose of these Statutes, the term “non-governmental organisation” (NGO) signifies any association, organisation, or other entity that:

- i. is an independent body established by a group of private individuals or organisations; has non-governmental and non-profit legal status in its country of incorporation; or is hosted by an organisation that has non-governmental and non-profit legal status in its country of incorporation;
- ii. is non-partisan and operates without discrimination with regard to race, nationality, gender, political, or religious conviction or social and economic background; and
- iii. has human rights/humanitarian programmes and/or activities that are consistent with the objectives of ICVA as described in Article I. f) and its Mission Statement.

## **Article VI. Membership Dues**

Dues for member agencies, expressed in Swiss Francs (CHF), shall be determined by the Board. The dues structure may be modified by the Board upon six months’ notice. Members will be notified of their fees each year, according to their membership status. The due date for payments will be within the second quarter of the year.

## **Article VII. Suspension, Termination of Membership**

a) A member agency will be suspended from membership after one year of non-payment of dues and will have its membership terminated in case of non-payment of dues over two years. The Secretariat will send notice to the member agency concerned six months prior to the termination.

b) A member agency may be suspended from membership for good and sufficient reasons by a decision of two-thirds of the Board.

c) The decision shall be communicated in writing to the member agency concerned.



## **PART C: ICVA GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MEMBERS**

### **Article VIII. Functions of the General Assembly**

The General Assembly is the supreme body of ICVA with responsibility for review of policy and programme. Its functions are:

- a) to consider issues and concerns related to humanitarian action world-wide;
- b) to review past activities;
- c) to adopt the long term strategy and strategic priorities;
- d) to elect the Board using a secret (confidential) ballot; ICVA members, not represented at the General Assembly, may submit their votes for the Board electronically.
- e) to elect the Chair of the Board directly following the election of the Board using a secret (confidential) ballot;
- f) to receive and review reports from the Board;

- g) to receive available audited financial statements;
- h) to amend the Statutes; and
- i) to consider such resolutions as may be submitted by member agencies.

**Article IX. Meetings. Quorum. Voting**

- a) The ICVA General Assembly shall normally be convened at least once in every three calendar years. The date place and format shall be decided by the Board, which may also call extraordinary meetings of the Assembly.
- b) The members may participate by an electronic mean, e.g. by video-conference, and vote through this mean.
- c) The representatives of at least one-third of members participating shall constitute a quorum at a meeting of the General Assembly.
- d) Each member agency is entitled to send accredited representatives to any meeting of the General Assembly. Each member agency is entitled to cast one vote. Except as otherwise specified by the Statutes, all decisions shall be taken by a simple majority of the member agencies present and voting.

**Article X. Chair of the General Assembly of Members**

The Chair of the Board shall preside at meetings of the General Assembly or may designate another member of the Board to act in her/his place. If the Chair of the Board is involuntarily absent or incapacitated, the Board shall designate one of its members to act in her/his place.

**Article XI. Observers at the General Assembly**

- a) Non-governmental organisations which are not members of ICVA, but which are interested in the purposes of ICVA and in this context the activities of voluntary agencies, may, with the approval of the Secretariat, send observers to the General Assembly. Such observers may participate in discussions without the right to vote.
- b) Governments, intergovernmental organisations, and other official bodies similarly interested may be invited by the Secretariat to send official observers to the General Assembly. Such observers shall have the right to participate in discussions without the right to vote.



**PART D: OTHER STRUCTURES**

**Article XII. Composition of the Board**

- a) The Board is composed of up to eleven (11) members:
  - nine member agencies elected by the General Assembly, taking into consideration:
    - the diversity of the agency's intended representative (including regional, programmatic and gender diversity);
    - willingness and ability of the representative to devote necessary time and energy to serve on the Board, and, where possible, to make his/her professional competence available to perform certain functions in the Board;
    - the rotation of agencies serving on the Board; and
    - not more than two agencies or individuals affiliated to an ICVA member co-opted by the Board as members.

- b) Each Board members' term of office shall last until the first meeting of the newly elected Board

immediately following the subsequent General Assembly.

- c) Elected Board members may be consecutively re-elected two times.
- d) Individuals affiliated to a member agency may be co-opted by the Board for a specific person and for a specific period
- e) The Chair, may be re-elected to consecutively succeed herself/himself in the same office for a maximum of one extra term.
- f) The Board may utilise the services of specialists who are able to assist ICVA based on their experience or position and who can participate in an advisory capacity in the meetings of the Board, without vote.
- g) In the event that a member agency elected to the Board by the General Assembly decides not to serve on it, or subsequently resigns, the Board has the authority to co-opt an additional member agency, to fill such a vacancy. An agency elected to the Board by this procedure shall serve until the first meeting of the Board following the subsequent General Assembly.
- h) In the event that the Chair position becomes vacant, (by reason of resignation from the chair position, death, disqualification, resignation from the member agency), Board members will select from among the other Board members a person who will fill the Chair position.
- i) In the event that a member agency requests to change their representative on the Board, the agency may recommend a substitute, subject to agreement by the Board.
- j) Each agency elected or co-opted to the Board designates in writing its representative on the Board, and that representative is entitled to cast one vote on all decisions. Except as otherwise specified by the Statutes, all Board decisions shall be taken by a simple majority of those voting.

### **Article XIII. Functions of the Board**

The Board's role is to ensure that ICVA stays true to its mission and to provide approval of policy, strategy, and the annual budget of ICVA, as well as to monitor implementation of ICVA's Strategic and Annual Plans.

Its functions are:

- a) to establish any necessary by-laws in accordance with the Statutes;
- b) to elect a Vice-Chair and Treasurer. The Vice-Chair and Treasurer may be re-elected to succeed herself/himself in the same office for a maximum of one extra term;
- c) To appoint one board member to act as the focal point for members of staff from the ICVA Secretariat on human resources related issues.
- d) to review and decide upon applications for membership in ICVA;
- e) to appoint, evaluate, and determine the duties of the Executive Director of the Secretariat; to review the staffing situation of the Secretariat in line with the annual budget; to oversee the development and implementation of the long term plan and strategic priorities; and to monitor the on-going work of the Secretariat;
- f) To adopt and monitor the implementation of the three year and annual workplans of the Secretariat;
- g) to approve an annual ICVA budget and exercise control thereof, as well as to receive contributions and donations, and raise funds from such sources as it deems appropriate;
- h) to establish a committee on finance and administration to review all matters pertaining to financial resources, financial management, and administration and ensure that the committee's terms of reference are reviewed and fulfilled on a regular basis;
- i) to establish terms of reference, composition, and time limits for any other necessary committees, working groups or task forces;
- j) to suspend or terminate agencies from membership for non-payment of fees or dues or for other good and sufficient reason, as established by the Board;
- k) to approve formal strategic partnerships and maintain relations with national or international bodies, including, but not limited to, global or regional NGO networks;
- l) to ensure preparation for the meetings of the General Assembly, including the establishment of a nominations committee for the purpose of preparing the election by the General Assembly of the Board, and to prepare a draft of the long term Strategy and strategic priorities for the General Assembly to adopt; and



m) to adopt appropriate policies that are in line with the strategy adopted by the General Assembly.

#### **Article XIV. Functions of the Secretariat**

The ICVA membership and Board are supported and serviced by the Secretariat that works to help implement ICVA's Strategic Plans and promote the work of ICVA and its members. The Secretariat is composed of the Executive Director and other staff members as authorised by the Board in accordance with the annual budget. The Executive Director, who holds final responsibility for the performance of the Secretariat, reports to the Board.

The role and responsibilities of the Secretariat are:

- a) to provide the membership with services in the areas of information, policy, advocacy, and coordination;
- b) to facilitate the formulation of, and to lead on the implementation of, the Strategic and Annual Plans as approved by the General Assembly and the Board respectively;
- c) to manage the activities of ICVA and report regularly to the Board;
- d) to facilitate and support the work of the Board and the General Assembly;
- e) to mobilise and manage financial resources and report regularly to the Treasurer, Finance and Administration Committee, and Board; and
- f) to promote ICVA membership.

#### **Article XV. Representation of the Views of ICVA**

The Board shall determine the manner and procedure for establishing the collective views of ICVA pertaining to any matter within its functions, scope, or activities. These collective views may be presented to any external governmental or other body, without this in any way impairing the right of any individual member agency to present its own views.



#### **PART E: GENERAL**

#### **Article XVI. Languages**

The working languages of ICVA shall be English and French.

#### **Article XVII. Amendments of Statutes**

The Statutes may be amended in accordance with the following procedure:

- a) a proposal for amendments may be submitted in writing to the Secretariat, either by a member of ICVA or by the Board, not later than sixty (60) days prior to the opening of any meeting of the General Assembly;
- b) any such proposal shall be submitted in writing to all members of ICVA at least thirty (30) days prior to the General Assembly;
- c) proposed amendments shall be accepted upon its adoption by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting; and
- d) amendments so adopted enter into effect at the close of that General Assembly.

#### **Article XVIII. Dissolution**

ICVA can be dissolved by a two-thirds majority of the members. In the case of dissolution, the affairs of the organisation shall be terminated by the Board. After settlement of all liabilities, the surplus assets will be entirely attributed to an institution, in Switzerland or abroad, pursuing an objective of public interest similar to that of ICVA and benefitting from a tax exemption. In no case will the assets be returned to the founding persons or to the members, nor used to their advantage, entirely or in part, in any manner whatsoever.

