



NGO Fora  
Support  
Programme

# NGO FORA MEMBER ENGAGEMENT GUIDE

Achieving active member  
engagement



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 ICVA

In 1962, in response to the post World War II forced displacement, NGOs came together to establish the NGO consortium ICVA. Since then, ICVA has grown into a diverse network of humanitarian NGOs operating at global, national and local levels. **ICVA advocates for:**

- Principled humanitarian action;
- Enhanced recognition of the vital role of NGOs; and
- High-quality partnerships among humanitarian stakeholders.

Based on its 2019-2021 strategy, ICVA promotes and facilitates NGO engagement in the development of the humanitarian sector, with a focus on forced migration, financing, coordination and navigating change: cross-cutting issues.

## 1.2 NGO fora

In humanitarian contexts, global, regional, national or sub-national NGO networks and coordination fora are established to help NGOs coordinate humanitarian action. NGO fora – collectively describing any local, national and/or international membership-based NGO forums, networks and platforms – are active in a range of areas. These include:

- Facilitating NGO engagement in the humanitarian response system;
- Ensuring an effective, inclusive and contextualised response; and
- Promoting collective NGO advocacy.

By working together, NGOs can have a stronger collective voice on issues of concern. In-country humanitarian NGO fora contribute to the effective and principled delivery of humanitarian assistance.

**Watch ICVA's video on the power of NGO fora's collective action.**



ICVA is committed to supporting these fora. In a context of rising humanitarian needs and increasingly complex humanitarian crises, effective NGO coordination is more critical than ever.

NGO fora have identified the need for resources to support strong member engagement at all levels of operation, from governance to representation and advocacy.

## 1.3 Member engagement in NGO fora

Whilst each NGO fora is unique in its membership, structure, scope, focus areas, and funding levels, all fora rely on member engagement. Member engagement includes – but is not limited to the sharing of expertise, good practice, information, and resources; and regular participation in events, meetings, priority setting, positioning, fora governance and other fora activities. Engagement connects members to the whole group, enabling action as a collective, and is paramount for a fora's credibility, accountability, impact and effectiveness. NGO fora work on the underlying principle that members are stronger together: key benefits of fora membership are the opportunities for mutual engagement, collaboration, sharing and influence.

*“In coming together as a collaborative, each partner acknowledges that working together [...] will yield greater impact than each organisation could achieve on their own” - Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy (GACP) Guiding Principles*

Strong member engagement is not a given. Members may have a different understanding of engagement or be unclear of their responsibilities as a fora member. A clear focus on achieving engagement is required to achieve an active and engaged membership.

## 1.4 How to use this guide

This guide was developed under ICVA's [NGO Fora Support Programme](#). It presents good practice and key considerations for NGO coordination fora seeking to achieve active and sustained member engagement. Whilst the guide is not definitive, it outlines a variety of considerations to inform member engagement work and is relevant to NGO fora of any size or scale.

The information contained in this guide draws on:

- An in-depth literature review of resources from the humanitarian sector and the wider arena;
- A series of consultations held with NGO fora members and stakeholders in 2018; and
- Key informant interviews with NGO fora directors and coordinators in 2019.

Section 2 provides an overview of NGO fora components alongside basic considerations for member engagement. Section 3 provides a detailed overview of member engagement good practices across a range of fora activities and processes. Section 4 outlines a simple process for development of a fora member engagement strategy. Finally, in annex 1, the guide includes a member engagement check list tool for use by NGO fora.

## 2. NGO FORA: COMPONENTS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

The main components of an NGO fora are described below with basic considerations for member engagement for each component. NGO fora's basic documents (Terms of Reference (ToR), statutes and/or by-laws) establish a fora's structure and governance model. The standard components of an NGO fora include:

- A. General Assembly (membership) - the highest governing body;**
- B. Steering/Executive Committee - the principle governing body;**
- C. Working groups and sub-groups;**
- D. Secretariat - when in place, whether paid, voluntary, or, seconded - forms the implementation/management body to deliver the work of the fora along side the membership;**
- E. Host agency - when in place - provides the operational framework for the fora to work within.**

The NGO fora's basic documents – the ToR, by-laws or/and statutes define how the fora components - listed above - work together to achieve objectives and remain accountable to all stakeholders. Members – primarily through the elected governance body – oversee the functioning and work of all fora components.

### 2.1 The General Assembly

The full membership of a fora makes up the General Assembly. *The primary means of member engagement for most NGO fora is a General Assembly meeting that brings all members together for a specific purpose with a defined agenda and process.* It is common for each full member to have one voting seat at the General Assembly. Other categories of memberships (such as affiliates or observers) may also be able to join but in a non-voting capacity. General Assembly meetings take place on a fixed schedule ranging from monthly to annually or longer, depending on the structure of the fora.

The General Assembly is the principle governing body, and the decision of the General Assembly always overrules other parts of the fora's governance and management. Certain decisions critical to the life of a fora are retained by the General Assembly (such as the decision to dissolve the fora), whilst many others are delegated to the Steering Committee. The power of the General Assembly puts the decision-making and direction of a fora within the hands of the membership.

#### 2.1.1 General Assembly good practice in member engagement

- Clearly define the membership criteria, benefits and responsibilities in a document that members sign upon joining the for a;
- Maintain up-to-date member contact lists;
- Include a membership requirement to participate in general assembly meetings;
- Have a fixed schedule of meetings;
- Ensure a fixed time limit for meetings and a clear, interesting agenda;
- Balance procedural sessions with informative or interactive presentations and opportunities for member dialogue.

### 2.2 Executive or Steering Committee

The General Assembly may elect an Executive or Steering Committee - as the principle governing body - to provide collective leadership and oversight for the fora. This body ensures that the fora's work, delivered by the membership or/and secretariat is aligned with the fora's strategy, annual work plans, donor commitments and financial capacity. The Executive/Steering Committee:

- Sets the direction of the fora;
- Makes strategic decisions prior to endorsement by the general assembly; and
- Maintains accountability to members and donors.

Generally, all full members of a fora are eligible to nominate themselves or another full member (with the other member's agreement) for election to the Committee. Committee members are usually the highest in-country representative of a member organisation with the ability and willingness to make decisions, at times on behalf of the entire membership. NGOs elected to the Executive/Steering Committee must have consistent representation in Committee meetings. Some fora allow the highest-level representative to occasionally delegate attendance to their deputy, based on prior approval and a full briefing of the deputy.

An attendance rate may be set that elected members must meet to retain their seat on the committee (for example, expected attendance of 75% - in person or remotely via conference call – or, missing two consecutive meetings being grounds for consideration of position).

### 2.2.1 Executive/Steering Committee member engagement considerations

- Develop a clear ToR for committee members that includes:
  - Remit;
  - Roles and responsibilities;
  - Minimum required levels of participation; and
  - Consequences for not meeting those obligations.
- Establish a clear, transparent, regularly-scheduled election process that gives every member the opportunity to engage, irrelevant of size or type of organisation.
- Where necessary, for example in mixed fora, consider implementing a quota system that reserves a certain number of seats on the committee for each type of member organisation to ensure equal representation.
- Certain 'benefits' that come with committee membership – such as visibility etc., can act as a draw factor to members seeking the role. Ensure the benefits and responsibilities of committee membership are clearly defined and balanced.
- Establish an orientation process for newly-elected committee members that reviews:
  - The current status of strategies, work plans and donor-funded programmes;
  - The specific roles and responsibilities of the committee; and
  - A clear handover from the exiting committee.
- Enable face-to-face and remote participation (conference call etc).
- Establish sub-committees (finance, membership etc.) to distribute responsibility between members.
- Ensure the Committee presents regular reports to the general membership.
- Consider appointing a Chair or Co-Chairs of the Committee – either through a whole membership election or through election within the elected Committee – to manage and monitor the Committee.

## 2.3 Sub-groups and working groups

Depending on the fora's priorities and the humanitarian context, the Steering Committee or General Assembly may elect to form sub-groups or working groups. These may be permanent groups or groups that meet for a limited time to address specific issues of concern. Their responsibilities may include coordination, positioning or advocacy among the wider humanitarian community. Sub-groups may be established at both national and sub-national levels and give members unique opportunities to:

- Engage and exchange information;
- Communicate and share key developments on a specific topic of interest;
- Identify opportunities to collaborate and coordinate; and
- Identify joint priorities and agree upon common positions or approaches.

### 2.3.1 Sub groups or working groups member engagement considerations

- Ensure all operationally relevant members have a seat, or, where group size is limited, the opportunity to nominate themselves for a seat, on sub-/working groups.
- Ensure all member organisations of sub-/working groups assign a representative who commits to consistent and regular participation.
- Elect a chair (or co-chairs) and a secretariat focal point for the group.
- Develop brief ToRs for each sub-/working group.
- Conduct sub-/working group meetings by:
  - Scheduling meetings with adequate advance notice;
  - Distributing agendas in advance of the meeting; and
  - Sharing meeting minutes and decisions with the sub-/working group and the general membership.
- Ensure the Secretariat or Executive/Steering Committee provides appropriate monitoring and/or oversight.
- Establish groups at both national and sub-national levels to encourage the participation of sub-national organisations and offices.

## 2.4 Secretariat

The membership and executive/steering committee of a fora are usually supported by a Secretariat. A Secretariat works to implement the fora's strategy and work plans and may be staffed by employed staff or member volunteers, depending on funding levels.

Common positions in a Secretariat are: coordinator/director; advocacy and policy manager; communications officer; administration assistant; finance manager; etc. The coordinator/director is responsible for the performance of the secretariat and is accountable to the Steering Committee. The coordinator/director usually reports directly to the Committee chair or a focal person within the Committee.

Secretariat staff must foster strong relations with and active participation of members - in accordance with a members capacity, expertise and needs, as well as build awareness on the fora's achievements, challenges and priorities through continuous and close communication with the membership.

### 2.4.1 Secretariat member engagement considerations

- Ensure coordinators/directors are equipped to facilitate the work of the fora whilst promoting and ensuring continuous, high-level member engagement.
- Establish clear procedures to ensure all fora products and positions are developed with fora members, even when processes are led by a Secretariat.
- Include and assess member engagement as a specific responsibility within each secretariat position's job description.
- Engage the Committee or wider membership in recruitment processes and decision-making.

## 2.5 Fora good governance and accountability

Good governance and accountability are basic components of effective NGO fora. They set the foundation for attracting and retaining strong member engagement and support, and are key for maintaining credibility, meeting funding goals, and achieving objectives.

Good governance and accountability are closely linked: an accountable NGO fora has a clear and functional internal governance framework. Governance refers to the transparent, clear and consistent way that power is exercised and decisions are made. Good governance moderates the control of any single person – be that a member, staff, or group – over a fora.

Accountability means demonstrating that decisions are made, resources used and actions taken for the purpose intended, in the agreed upon ways, and with efficiency and transparency. For an NGO fora, being accountable means presenting its structure, processes, policies, strategy, work plans and activities, results, financial procedures, resources used, human resource policies and governance structure to members, funders and others, and operating at all times with-in that framework. It is the role and responsibility of the membership – through the elected

Executive/Steering Committee and the General Assembly to oversee and ensure accountability.

NGO fora are accountable:

- **Internally:** to members, staff, volunteers and the Steering Committee/Board;
- **Externally:** to external partners, including donors and governments;
- **Externally:** to those whom the members of the NGO fora ultimately seek to serve.

NGO fora accountability is primarily enforced internally, through self-regulatory mechanisms, and internal rules and procedures under the oversight of the membership and the member-elected governance body.

Good governance, transparency and accountability require the presence of clear policies and processes. These policies guide the fora's ways of working and ensure members provide oversight for the fora's strategic direction, leadership and decision-making. This is the case for fora of every size and structure.

The following elements support a fora's governance and accountability, and amendments to any of these documents or processes will require membership involvement and approval of the General Assembly:

- Mission statement;
- Organisational structure and lines of responsibility;
- Legal registration, Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Host Agency, or MoU between organisations that make up a voluntary fora;
- Clearly defined membership policy, procedures, rules and responsibilities, including decision-making processes;
- Governance documents (statutes, by-laws and/or ToRs);
- Transparent election/selection processes for Executive/Steering Committee;
- Published list of Executive/Steering Committee and Board members;
- Documentation of Executive/Steering Committee and Board meetings;
- Regular member and partner feedback opportunities and related reports;
- Orientation package and/or session for new Executive/Steering Committee and for new fora members;
- Clear separation of management from governance (Executive/Steering Committee) functions;
- Job descriptions for Secretariat or volunteer positions that include responsibilities for member engagement;
- Regular financial reports and independent audits of member and donor funds;
- Regular internal and external evaluations.

### 2.5.1 Good governance and accountability member engagement considerations

- Establish clear, member-endorsed statutes or ToRs that define the fora's components.
- Establish clear, member-endorsed statutes or ToRs that define the fora's ways of working; decision-making; membership and leadership criteria, roles and responsibilities; grounds for termination; etc.
- Define a clear process for amending statutes and ToRs that includes member approval.
- Ensure that one representative from each member organisation has the mandate to make decisions and vote on behalf of the member organisation.
- Establish a clear ToR for the Executive/Steering Committee that includes steps to ensure the governing body is representative of the membership.
- Ensure Executive/Steering Committee members are fully aware of and monitored in their governance and accountability roles and responsibilities.
- Establish and enforce consequences for Executive/Steering Committee members who fail to meet their responsibilities.
- Support Executive/Steering Committee members through a clear orientation process.
- Schedule regular external audits and distribute audit reports to the membership.
- Schedule regular internal and external evaluations that involve members as key informants and distribute reports to the membership and other stakeholders.
- Ensure members provide feedback on fora operations, priorities, activities and ways of working (through annual member surveys, scheduled work-plan reviews, individual member meetings, etc.).
- Ensure the membership conducts periodic reviews of the governance arrangement.

# 3. BEST PRACTICES IN MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

## 3.1 Fostering engagement through collective member ownership

NGO fora are collective networks – meaning that they are only as strong as the sum of engagement of their membership. Collective ownership is critical to achieving member engagement, support and loyalty; in order to function well members need to feel a sense of ‘ownership’. The following are identified as priorities in fostering collective ownership:

- **Clearly defined remit of the fora.** This includes being clear about the fora’s mission, vision and ways of working so members clearly understand the fora’s value to *them* as well as their *responsibility* and ways to add value to the *fora*;
- **Welcoming and inclusive atmosphere and environment.** All member organisations should have an equal ‘voice’, regardless of their size or scope;
- **Clearly defined membership benefits and responsibilities;**
- **Clear and transparent decision-making processes.** Each member should have the same weight in the process;
- **Clear avenues for engagement.** Members must know how the fora sets and revises priorities, strategies and work plans so they can contribute to the fora’s internal and external products and processes;
- **Defined data protection standards.** Members should be able to trust how data will be shared and used;
- **Opportunities for members to represent the fora;**
- **Opportunities for members to lead working groups;**
- **Opportunities for members to serve in governance roles.** Regardless of size, all member organisations should be able to run for elected positions such as the Executive/Steering Committee.

As a fora grows and matures, clear and well-communicated policies, procedures, and mechanisms to monitor member engagement are key to achieving member engagement. Overall, analysis of member engagement enables a fora to respond appropriately where member engagement wanes – for an individual member or across the fora.

## 3.2 Setting member engagement expectations

Strong membership engagement is not necessarily easy to achieve. Each fora can expect to see a range of engagement levels from heavily engaged members to less engaged members who still value their membership. However, fora can define the minimum expected engagement for members to maintain their membership status.

Fora commonly require members to commit to support and participate in fora activities and to build and uphold the fora’s collective identity, reputation and visibility. It is also common for fora to require member attendance at meetings of the General Assembly, where voting and decision-making occurs. It is essential to be explicit on what members can expect by being a fora member:

- The benefits of membership;
- The expectations or requirements for membership; and
- The consequences of not meeting the membership engagement requirements.

These requirements can be documented in the fora’s membership policy, overall ToR or statutes.

Common NGO fora member benefits and engagement requirements	
Common benefits	Common requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect, network and exchange information with a large number of NGOs and humanitarian organisations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designate a primary and secondary person as focal point for the fora.</li> <li>• Share contact details of member primary and secondary contact points.</li> <li>• Keep contact details updated.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish, engage in, and benefit from collective advocacy priorities and activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Join relevant thematic and/or regional working groups.</li> <li>• Appoint and engage with a technical/ regional focal point.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence policy and practice through fora access to UN, donor, and government humanitarian platforms and decision makers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure appropriate, continuous representation and participation in general member meetings.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate key humanitarian concerns and responses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring issues of common concern to the fora for discussion and possible joint response.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share and receive information on current humanitarian areas and responses to better inform your work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share information with the fora on priority issues and areas of common interest.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform the fora direction and priorities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond to member requests for information sharing, data sharing, sign-off for external products, etc.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have the opportunity to run for election on the fora’s governance body (Executive/Steering Committee).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to joint products based on need and capacity.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be considered as a representative for the fora.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the fora and its activities within their own organisation and the wider humanitarian sector.</li> </ul>

*“Organisations become members for a reason, it might be to work collectively and jointly, but it might just primarily be to know what’s going on. But all (members) have a reason and an interest. Country Director meetings naturally draw people – because they are high quality they are seen as important to be there.”* NGO fora Coordinator

### 3.3 Member induction and refresher

A clear and full understanding of a fora and its ways of working by each member is important to achieving member engagement. A common reason for poor engagement is lack of understanding of fora components or member roles and responsibilities. There are a variety of approaches that can be used to support member awareness of fora ways of working and engagement opportunities.

#### 3.3.1 Member induction pack

A simple induction pack for new members, staff or partners provides a foundation for fora engagement and ensures a shared understanding of what the fora does and does not do and how it functions. It includes key organisational documents, contact lists, meeting schedules, ways of working, and member engagement information. The resource section of this guide includes [an example](#) induction pack.

#### 3.3.2 One-on-one meetings

Where capacity allows, for example in a funded fora with an employed Secretariat, member engagement can be strengthened through regular one-on-one member meetings. These can be face-to-face or, where the fora and member are not co-located, via video call. The following meeting types can enhance member engagement:

- **One-on-one meetings with new members** orient new members to the fora's ways of working, priorities, mission, strategy, membership requirements, and opportunities for member engagement. The unique benefit of an individual meeting is that it can be tailored to each individual member's strengths and needs and ensures that all new members are fully orientated.
- **One-on-one meetings with existing members when the primary focal point for the fora changes.** Due to the central role of the primary focal point in fora engagement and support, it is important to ensure that new representatives have the same level of induction as new members.
- **Annual one-on-one member meetings** are an effective way of checking in with individual members throughout the year. One-on-one member meetings ensure that all members are engaged and provides both the fora and the members with the opportunity to give and receive confidential feedback.

#### 3.3.3 Group induction and refresher meetings

Fora with lower resource capacity can hold monthly meetings for new members and/or new focal points. Such meetings serve the same purpose as individual member meetings but require a lower time commitment. Annual group refresher meetings can also be held. However, there is a risk that the most active members will attend, whilst the least active members will not.

### 3.4 Member communication and document access

Clear and effective communication pathways and access to fora documents and records are critical to a fora's collective functioning as well as to member engagement. Members must be able to communicate both with one another and with the fora. Clear communication and document access can encourage members to:

- Keep their contact details up-to-date;
- Attend general membership meetings;
- Engage in meetings and working groups; and
- Share the fora's communications/information with their wider organisation's staff.

#### 3.4.1 Effective communication

Effective communication pathways rely on the presence of certain key elements:

- **Contact lists.** The basic start point is maintaining a member contact list that includes primary and secondary contact information for each member organisation. Members are responsible for informing the fora of changes in a timely manner. Additional contact lists may be developed for governance bodies and working groups.
- **Harmonised procedures.** It can be easy to overload or overwhelm members with communications, particularly emails. A clear system or approach is needed to reduce, harmonise and organise information to make it accessible and digestible.
- **Email procedures.** To ensure quality and oversight, emails to the full membership should be kept to the absolute minimum and should follow a clear Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). An SOP might describe:
  - The type of emails that should be sent to the whole membership;
  - The address from which fora emails are sent; and
  - The email marking system used by the fora to signal the nature and urgency of the communication (usually inserted in the subject line).

(See *Fora email communication SOP* for a sample email SOP.)

- **Member bulletins or newsletters.** Bulletins and newsletters are effective, accessible tools for sharing information on upcoming activities, priorities, meetings and member requests. They can be easily distributed to members and partners, with the potential for onward circulation internally. Newsletters can be compiled in a simple, consistent format and sent on a regular schedule. Most fora send bulletins on a monthly or quarterly basis.



## FORA EMAIL COMMUNICATION SOP

**PURPOSE:** To ensure quality and management of fora email communications both internal and external to support member engagement.

**DEVELOPMENT /APPROVAL:** Email communication to the whole fora membership, or to fora Executive Committee will

take place only through the [insert position here]. Other staff will hold specific designated responsibility for group mailing lists e.g., Advocacy working group, Admin finance working group, Emergency response working group etc.

**CONTENT:**

Subject line	Topics
ADVOCACY	ADVOCACY: Advocacy working group meeting invitation.
	ADVOCACY: Advocacy working group meeting notes, work plan etc.
	Comments:
	For non-objection:
	Fora briefing (add as needed *draft, for non-objection, final)
	Fora statement (add as needed *draft, for non-objection, final)
DATA REQUEST	Data request: for quarterly visa data, response mapping etc.
	Data request: for bi-annual preparedness and response mapping data.
FORA ELECTION	Election: request for nominations of fora Executive Committee.
	Election: list of potential candidates.
	Election: draft ballot for review.
	Election: final ballot list with no further amendments.
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE	Executive Committee related emails.
INFO	INFO: HCT notes, ICCM notes, humanitarian bulletins, Invitations for trainings and events, alerts, humanitarian information.
INFO REGIONAL	INFO XX regional – all info and meeting notes for xx region
INVITATION	To a meeting or event
MEMBER	MEMBER: membership fee invoice, receipt etc.
	MEMBER: updated contact lists.
	MEMBER: requests for contacts.
	MEMBER: (Month) member update.
	MEMBER: members meeting invitation, notes.
MEMBER PRODUCT	Product: final preparedness and response mapping database, visa, data, research reports etc., (all final products, reports will fall in this category)
FORA STAFF	Internal emails

### 3.4.2 Online access to fora documentation and records

As staff – both of the fora and of members – change over, as a collective it is essential to have a clear system where member can access key fora documents and documentation. Ease of access will also act to increase and enhance engagement. This can be achieved through:

- The fora website with a password protected members area with all member documents and records;
- An online filing and storage system such as dropbox, onedrive, or google drive.

## 3.5 Opportunities to work together and engage collectively

To achieve an active and engaged membership a fora can nurture collective opportunities and ways of working such as through:

### • Thematic working groups.

Working groups focus on a specific thematic area with a seat retained for each operationally relevant member. They may be led by a member or by staff. Group members decide the frequency and method of meeting (e.g. face-to-face or/and remotely). Encouraging one consistent representative per member, holding regular advanced scheduled meetings, and establishing a working group mailing list enhances engagement and impact.

### • Advocacy working group.

Advocacy is a key area for many NGO fora. The strength of the collective voice increases overall ability to collaborate and jointly position on key areas. Member engagement ensures that fora's positions represent and are supported by members to the greatest extent possible. An Advocacy working group can provide a clear avenue for member engagement in the work and positioning of NGO for a. See the [ICVA NGO Fora Advocacy Guide](#) for further information and details on effective collective advocacy.

### • Ad hoc meetings.

Meetings linked to a fora's focus area provide an additional avenue for member engagement. Well-run meetings with engaging speakers that members otherwise have little access to encourage high levels of attendance. Meetings may be announced through working groups, email, Skype groups or/and fora newsletters.

### • Decentralised fora meetings or chapters.

Decentralised meetings and sub-national fora coordination encourage the engagement of (a) member organisations with main offices at the sub-national level and (b) senior staff of sub-office of member organisations who are often closer to implementation. These groups may be supported by a dedicated person from the secretariat, a member at the sub-national level, or by one or more member focal points. Key benefits of sub-national meetings include:

- Updating sub-national focal points on fora representation, stakeholder engagement and meetings;
- Discussing the sub-national humanitarian, development, and operational environments; setting local priorities; and gaining sub-national input for fora coordination and advocacy; and
- Providing a meeting and coordination point for sub-national focal points to communicate with each other and influence fora work and positioning.

*“We have state (sub-national) level representatives, so do not only have the national level. We hold monthly meetings at the national and state (sub-national) levels. This provides a platform to discuss general issues as well as concerns at the local level. This hugely increases engagement”* NGO fora Coordinator

### • Donor briefings.

NGO fora are often uniquely positioned to engage a wide range of donors on a reciprocal basis. Donors receive detailed information on humanitarian response gaps and priorities whilst NGO fora seek donor support for under-funded, under-served, or high-priority areas or issues as well as to draw attention to specific, policy or practice positions or approaches. Thus, a standing donor briefing can be of great interest to members. Such meetings usually have attendance limited to the governing body and members with operational expertise and the ability to develop and deliver a briefing.

### • Statements, position papers and briefing notes.

Members can be encouraged to suggest priority areas and contribute to producing, reviewing and endorsing fora products. Whilst the subject and draft content of an external statement, position paper or briefing note may be managed by a working group, the full membership may have the option to review and endorse the final product. Clear SoPs should guide the review and sign off processes. See the [ICVA Collective Advocacy Guide for further guidance](#).

### • Collective data and products.

Mapping the collective capacity of a fora builds collective identify and visibility. A standard template can be developed, and significant time for individual member follow-up may be required to get data from all, or most, members. Products may include mappings of:

- National presence;
- Funding (both by sector and the total collective funding in a country);
- Preparedness response capacity;
- Member programming (3/4/5W's); and
- Member profiles.

### Fora product templates

Having excellent fora products, with clear and consistent branding that are accessible to both fora members and external partners can serve to increase confidence and in turn engagement with the fora. A fora may develop a series of templates to enable consistency in products whether they are developed by fora members or with the Secretariat.

Certain well designed external products that are of interest to a wider audience, including donors, may act as a specific draw for membership and member engagement, For example: well designed NGO fora member profiles; published case studies of member good practice; online NGO presence mapping by organisation, district/province/governorate and sector, etc.

### • Networking events.

Such events provide an informal setting for members and external partners to meet and connect. They can build community and increase collective identity.

### 3.6 Member engagement in decision making

Transparency and accountability in how decisions are taken within a fora is of high importance; NGO fora need to show that decisions represent the majority of the membership. A clear process for decision-making is essential to guide consistent processes, which engage the membership. Fora can develop SOPs to ensure consistency and transparency in decision making under a variety of circumstances. Some fora have more decision-making retained by the General Assembly, whilst others have more delegated to the Executive or Steering Committee.

Whilst processes will vary widely by type of decision and by fora, an example of a membership fora decision-making process is given here:

- A quorum for decision-making by vote is set (e.g. 2/3rds of the governance body or membership);
- Key decisions are initially discussed by a relevant group of members;
- The options and the group's recommendations are presented to the Executive Committee or full membership in a General Assembly meeting;
- The Executive Committee or General Assembly makes the decision based on either (a) consensus or (b) a vote.

#### Effective meetings

Organising good meetings should not be overlooked as a solid means to maintain member engagement. Meetings should be:

**Well planned**, with invitations sent out well in advance, held in a location that is accessible and safe to all those invited. If a suitable location is impossible, consider using technology to maximise participation (e.g. Skype, webcasts, etc.).

**Well structured**, with a clear agenda – with clear objectives and outcomes - agreed (in advance), with a set time limit while also offering the flexibility to adapt the agenda for priority issues that may arise during the meeting.

**Inclusive** with interpretation provided and responsible measures taken to ensure accessibility.

**Focused** by having clear objectives and expected outcomes.

**Facilitated** in a way that encourages members to participate freely, keeps the meeting to the allocated time, and ensures clear outcomes and conclusions.

**Concluded** by reviewing the agreed decisions, conclusions and next steps before the end of the meeting.

**Document** with short, clear minutes and action points that are shared with participants to agree, within a short timeframe the meeting.

### 3.7 Fora representation

Being representative of the membership is critical to a fora's effectiveness, credibility and member engagement. A question frequently raised by external partners is 'How do NGO collectives ensure their representation actually represents the views of the membership?' The following questions can be used to consider or reflect on current fora practice in this area:

- How does your fora ensure that the work represents the membership?
- How do you gain members' views?
- How are members involved in setting priorities?
- How does the membership contribute to the development and approval of the fora's strategic plan?
- How are external positions and products reviewed and endorsed by each member?
- How do you gain member feedback on the work of the fora?

There are a number of ways that fora can ensure credibility in this regard. Each fora should have defined ways of working (i.e. Standard Operating Procedures) around decision-making, strategy development and revision, and joint position development and approval (for further information, see the [ICVA NGO Fora Advocacy Guide](#)).

#### Appointing fora representatives

A fora may have standing seats at humanitarian coordination fora and working groups or may receive ad-hoc invitations to meetings and events. The possibility to attend these meetings as a fora representative can be a key driver of member engagement. To maintain credibility and professionalism, however, it is essential that fora representatives are well informed and prepared to represent the collective, not their own agency, at all key humanitarian coordination fora.

Representatives for standing meetings should be allocated through a clear and transparent process and endorsed by the General Assembly. Representing the fora is a privilege and a responsibility. Before accepting a role as fora representative, members should be made aware of the linked obligations. Representatives should then be monitored in the delivery of their commitment to ensure they are meeting the minimum defined commitment to maintain their representative position. Below is an example of a foras representation criteria and responsibilities of fora representatives:

## Example FORA REPRESENTATION CRITERIA AND RESPONSIBILITY:

### Allocated representation criteria:

- Attends and participates in fora meetings;
- Shows the ability and willingness to represent the fora – not individual NGOs – at designated representation assignments;
- Fills a significantly senior post in their organisation:
  - Most senior level representation for key humanitarian representation (HCT etc.); or
  - A senior staff member for other meetings (inter-agency coordination meetings).
- Has organisational expertise and operational relevance to the areas covered by the meeting;
- A minimum of two members, or a Secretariat staff plus a member to represent at external meetings.

### Allocated representation responsibility:

- Ensure they are on the mailing list for the related meeting;
- Attend meeting as representative of the fora (not their own agency);
- Be an active member of the group and solicit input from members;
- Seek appropriate input from the fora's Secretariat or membership to represent the group as accurately and responsibly as possible;
- Attend or initiate pre-meetings. *Failure to attend two consecutive pre-meetings for the assigned representation will result in review of allocation;*
- Send notes of the meeting's key points to the fora's coordinator/director/chair by the end of the same day for circulation to the membership;
- Arrange for the alternate contact to attend if the representative cannot. If the alternate cannot attend, the representative must inform the coordinator/director/ chair. *Failure to coordinate with and arrange for an alternate for two consecutive meetings will result in review of the allocation.*

## 3.8 Member engagement with a diverse membership

Fora are often comprised of diverse members. This may include NGOs of varying sizes, focus areas, main office locations, a range of local, national and international NGOs, and diversity in experiences and interests. Maintaining member engagement with a diverse membership requires a detailed understanding of the range of members and their interests, needs and engagement potential. In this way, a fora can provide content and engagement methods that are relevant to all members.

One mixed NGO fora found that whilst their membership was comprised of 40% national NGOs, only 13% were attending the monthly CD meetings compared to 50% of INGO members. This insight prompted the NGO fora to understand the barriers to and increase the engagement of national NGO members. Whilst part of the reason was lower (time) capacity of smaller organisations to attend, additional barriers, such as language, location, meeting timing and focus were identified. In addition, the need for a dedicated meeting for national NGOs Executive Directors was identified due to the dynamic of a significant percentage of national NGO members being grantees or partners of international NGOs and seeing the INGO CD as their donor.

### Key considerations for achieving active member engagement with a diverse membership include:

- **Is there equal, relevant content for all members?**  
For example a strategic focus on administrative access barriers (INGO registration, staff visas, etc.) may be most relevant and useful for INGOs, while a strategic focus on capacity building may be of a higher priority for NNGOs.
- **Are communication methods effective for all members?**  
Whilst NGO fora primarily communicate via email, some fora need to use methods tailored to local NGOs that spend less time connected to email or Skype. WhatsApp groups and text messages can be useful alternatives.
- **Do meetings meet the needs of all members?**
  - **Location:** Are meetings physically accessible for all members both in terms of geographic location and security/access requirements? If not, can members join via tele-conference or can **sub-national meetings** be arranged?  
*“Provincial (sub-national) level work is very important to member engagement. Many members are only working at the Provincial (sub-national) level. Also the staff at this level are the ones that are directly engaged at the local level”* NGO fora Deputy Director
  - **Power dynamics:** Do all members stand equally in terms of voice and inter-organisational relationships? Consider including separate meetings for NNGO Executive Directors to offer more freedom of expression for grantees or implementing partners of other members.
  - **Language:** Do all members speak one language fluently? If not, how can interpretation be provided? Consider using simultaneous translation, at least for main fora meetings.
  - **Timing:** Are meetings timed around security considerations? Can members complete travel by sunset? Do meetings avoid interfering with events of cultural or religious significance?
  - **Meeting space:** Where possible, is the meeting room big enough to accommodate the full membership in reasonable comfort?

- **Is the Executive or Steering Committee reflective of the membership**

Where a fora has a range of member types, for example both NNGO and INGO members, the statutes or ToR should define steps to ensure the governance is representative of the membership. All members should have the opportunity to run for and be elected to leadership positions. The majority of mixed NGO fora have a set number of seats for each member type on their governing body. For example, where six seats are elected, three may be retained for NNGOs and three for INGOs. Some fora also have a post-election process where the committee itself nominates one additional member to fill a diversity gap (such as a female, sub-national main office, NNGO, etc.).

*“National NGOs feel sometimes they cannot raise some points because their donors are in the same room. Also, (whilst most meetings serve all members and are merged) there are some differences in interests and priorities. Meetings for Executive Directors of NNGO’s are important. They allow participation into deeper issues of national NGOs”* NGO fora staff

### 3.9 Data protection and trust

Trust is critical to member engagement. Members are more likely to engage – for example through sharing updates, issues and information, sharing data, and, contributing to fora products and priorities – when they have a high level of trust in how the information and data shared will be stored and used.

NGO fora can put in place a simple data protection policy, that all staff and members are bound by, that outlines:

- How membership details will be collected, stored and used, for example what components of contact details can be shared with different parties (organisations name, country director name, email, phone number etc.);
- A requirement to specify how data will be used for each individual data set or information request;
- A commitment to only use information shared by members for the purpose for which the information was requested and collected;
- A commitment to aggregate all information shared by members without making reference to any individual NGO member – unless explicit informed permission is gained from a member;
- A commitment to not name or refer to individual members when discussing incidents or situations in individual or group internal or external meetings with members, partners or wider parties.

### 3.10 Member feedback and satisfaction

A key motivation for engagement in NGO fora is the access and strength of voice a collective brings – for example with government authorities and within coordination systems and structures. For this to work members need to feel that their views are heard, that they are informing the positions and work of the fora. Equally, perceived credibility of the fora and member satisfaction is key to active member engagement.

*“A membership that is satisfied with and feels confident in and connected to the work of the fora is more likely to be actively engaged”* NGO fora Coordinator

Gaining member feedback through accessible, meaningful methods; publishing a transparent overview of findings or data collected; and using the data to adjust the fora’s functioning and ways of working is central to facilitating member engagement in fora development.

#### 3.10.1 Member and partner surveys

An annual survey is a simple, common and inclusive way to gain input. Surveys can assess perceptions, gauge satisfaction, identify gaps and gain input to direct future fora priorities. Member surveys help a fora recognise and respond to the needs and demands of the membership, including the fora’s governance and overall functioning. Partner surveys show how external stakeholders perceive the added value of the fora.

Surveys are often issued through an online platform such as Survey Monkey. Online platforms help enforce a clear timeline and manage response data. Paper-based forms can also be distributed for manual completion at all fora meetings during the survey period to increase response rates. For ease of analysis, questions should be multiple choice with the option of elaborating on responses in text boxes.

A transparent summary of key findings should be available for members, and the results of the survey presented at a general assembly meeting and used to inform the fora’s service delivery, strategy implementation and activities. See the resource section for an example of an annual member survey.

#### 3.10.2 Annual bilateral meetings with members

Annual bilateral meetings with each member are useful for gaining member feedback and input at the individual level, particularly in situations where engagement is lower than expected.

#### 3.10.3 Feedback and complaint mechanism

As with any organisation, fora must implement an effective feedback and complaint system that is easily accessible to members, staff, partners, stakeholders and other beneficiaries. There should be a variety of avenues for feedback and complaints, including a system for anonymous reporting. Reports should be acted on within a set timeframe under a clear report-handling mechanism. A regular, anonymised summary of reports and their outcomes should be published.

- What feedback and complaints system does your fora have in place?
- How effective is the mechanism?
- How is collated data on complaints and reports shared?

### 3.11 Measuring member engagement

Whilst there will naturally be a range of engagement amongst members, with some members being more engaged than others – both generally or through variation over time linked to capacity or interest, measuring member engagement levels is vital to achieving an engaged membership. Member engagement data shows the level of engagement of each member across different fora activities. It is useful to:

- Highlight which fora activities achieve high and low engagement;
- Understand which members are most engaged;
- Understand which members are least engaged;
- Select what members need focused support to seek to increased engagement;
- Identify groups of members may need tailored fora engagement opportunities to increase engagement;
- Where a fora has set member engagement expectations or requirements, member engagement data can be used monitoring member adherence (such as attendance at X% of General Assembly meetings etc.);
- Assessing if a member meets the criteria for a certain function e.g. to run for the governance body if engagement at a minimum level is a requirement;
- Monitoring the engagement and performance of governance bodies or fora representative and ensuring they meet the criteria to maintain the position.

*“When an in- active member is identified, an individual meeting with the member is arranged, to explore reasons for not engaging. Engagement is a requirement of membership, all members need to be present and to contribute”* NGO fora Deputy - Director

In addition to being used to respond to low engagement of a member, or to review reasons for low member engagement in a fora activity, information on member engagement may be shared with the wider membership, for example in advance of a fora election for governance positions or representation positions.

### 3.12 Membership growth and member retention

Most NGO fora do not undertake specific outreach efforts to grow their membership or retain members. Membership growth and retention naturally result when fora use good membership engagement practices and create a sense of collective ownership. Ownership occurs when a fora offers members added value and establishes credibility with the membership, external partners, and other stakeholders.

*“If a fora is clearly structured, doing good work, and, meetings and activities are relevant to, and add value for, the full spectrum of the target membership, people will come and stay”* INGO fora Director

**There are certain simple steps that some fora take to attract new members, these include:**

- An accessible website with a clear section that explains how to become a member and includes:
  - Membership criteria;
  - Application process;
  - Application form;
  - Supporting documents; and
  - Contact information for membership questions and application submissions.
- Including a link on external products to the website pages on becoming a member e.g. ‘If you are not a member of the fora and would like to join, please find membership details here xxx’;
- Encourage members to raise awareness on the fora and refer partner organisations for membership;
- Implementing projects that give visibility to member NGOs, for example developing NGO directory, or member profiles;
- Hosting meetings for organisations interested to join; as well as
- Offering one-time observation status at fora meetings;
- Issuing membership certificates on an annual basis – linked to the credibility that fora membership provides;
- Offering member-only capacity building activities and training courses.

*“Existing members, refer new members, there is the opportunity for a potential new member to come as a guest observer to a fora meeting as a one-off opportunity to see how it works and we disseminate communication on activities, but overall is a natural process, by providing an excellent platform, NGOs want to join and stay”* NGO fora Director

### 3.13 Member suspension and termination

A fora’s statutes or ToR should define both the grounds and process for suspending and terminating a member. The following are commonly stated grounds for termination:

- A. A member organisation wishes to terminate its membership and gives written notification;
- B. A member organisation ceases to operate in the country of the fora;
- C. A member’s membership fees remain six months or more in arrears following a written reminder;
- D. The fora terminates the organisation’s membership for ‘just cause’, such as a serious breach of the fora’s statutes, principles, policies, Code of Conduct, and/or ways of working.

In the cases of B, C, and D, the membership maintains the ultimate decision-making power. It will usually be delegated to the Executive/Steering Committee to review the information and vote on termination of membership. The concerned member organisation may have the right to present its case to the Executive/Steering Committee in advance of the vote or to appeal the decision after the vote. Terminated members may also have the right to re-apply for membership, for example from six or twelve months following termination.

In the case of D, where ‘just cause’ is brought to the attention of the fora, a team may be established to investigate the allegation and make recommendations to the Executive/Steering Committee.

In any case of termination, membership fees tend to be non-refundable and remain due.

## 4. A ROAD MAP FOR AN NGO FORA MEMBER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Member engagement may be an objective or component within a foras overall strategic plan; and/or, it may be a freestanding strategy or/and workplan. As each fora is different, there is not a one-size fits all strategy to build and maintain strong member engagement. However, a strategy will focus and guide a fora's member engagement work, laying out a clear road plan over time.

### A strong effective strategy could contain the following components:

1. Define member engagement – what does it look like?  
How will it be measured?;
2. Assess member engagement – with a base line and regular monitoring. What will be measured, how often, by whom? Analyse engagement by individual members and by types of members;
3. General objective/goal – what are you seeking to achieve overall – what needs to be different from how it is now?  
How will the change in engagement it be measured?;
4. Specific objectives/goals – what are the sub-objectives/ goals that will need to be achieved to meet the overall general objective/goal? When will then be achieved by? Who is responsible for making it happen? How will they be measured?;
5. Define concrete steps and measures to be taken – laid out in a workplan – to achieve the member engagement goals;
6. Set a time frame for the overall strategy, for each specific objective/goal and each concrete step;
7. Monitor and measure implementation of the workplan and strategy;
8. Monitor and measure member engagement levels.

Increasing and maintaining member engagement is an on-going effort. After you measure progress, make decisions on adjustments needed to the work plan to maximise impact – what is and is not working? What changes could make it more effective?

## RESOURCES

- [Start Fund Handbook, 2017](#)
- [NGO Coordination Guide, ICVA, 2013](#)
- AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT INCORPORATED [Rules and Objects of ACFID](#), 2017
- [ALNAP Governance Management and Membership, 2016](#)
- [Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Risk Reduction Membership Guidelines, 2018](#)
- [VOICE statutes](#), 2018
- Video resource on “Effective Strategies to Improve Member Engagement, Satisfaction and Ultimately Retention” – linked primarily to member engagement in online communities <https://vimeo.com/223171526>
- NGO Fora (PHF) Induction Summary for New Members, ‘[What is PHF: Information pack for new members, staff and partners](#)’ PHF 2014, available at ICVA NGO Fora Resource Centre
- [Example NGO Fora Annual Member Feedback and Satisfaction Survey](#), Claire Whiting, available at ICVA NGO Fora Resource Centre
- [ICVA NGO Fora Advocacy Guide](#), 2016

# ANNEX 1

## A checklist for best practices for NGO fora member engagement

This checklist provides a resource for NGO fora to review and access their member engagement processes. The items listed provide examples, but are not exhaustive.

### 5.1 General Assembly

- Clearly define the membership criteria, benefits and responsibilities in a document that members sign upon joining the fora;
- Maintain up-to-date member contact lists;
- Require members to participate in General Assembly meetings;
- Have a fixed schedule of meetings;
- Ensure a fixed time limit for meetings and a clear, interesting agenda;
- Balance procedural sessions with informative or interactive presentations and opportunities for member dialogue.

### 5.2 Executive/Steering Committee

- Consider implementing a quota system that reserves a certain number of seats on the committee for each type of member organisation to ensure equal representation – particularly in mixed fora;
- Establish a clear, transparent, regularly-scheduled election process that gives every member an equal vote;
- Develop a clear ToR for committee members that includes:
  - Remit;
  - Roles and responsibilities;
  - Minimum required levels of participation; and
  - Consequences for not meeting those obligations.
- Ensure the benefits and responsibilities of committee membership are clearly defined and balanced;
- Establish an orientation process for newly-elected committee members that reviews:
  - The current status of strategies, work plans and donor-funded programmes;
  - The specific roles and responsibilities of the committee; and
  - A clear handover from the exiting committee.
- Enable face-to-face and remote participation (conference call, shared workspaces, etc.);
- Establish topic-specific sub-committees to distribute responsibility between members;
- Ensure the committee presents regular reports to the general membership.

### 5.3 Sub-groups or working groups

- Ensure all operationally relevant members have a seat, or the opportunity to nominate themselves for a seat, on sub-/working groups;
- Ensure all member organisations of sub-/working groups assign a representative who commits to consistent and regular participation;
- Elect a chair (or co-chairs) and a Secretariat focal point for the group;
- Develop brief ToRs for each sub-/working group.

- Conduct sub-/working group meetings by:
  - Scheduling meetings with adequate advance notice;
  - Distributing agendas in advance of the meeting; and
  - Sharing meeting minutes and decisions with the sub-/working group and the general membership.
- Ensure the Secretariat or Executive/Steering Committee provides appropriate monitoring and/or oversight;
- Establish appropriate groups at both national and sub-national levels to encourage the participation of sub-national organisations and offices.

### 5.4 Secretariat

- Ensure coordinators/directors are equipped to facilitate the work of the fora whilst promoting and ensuring continuous, high-level member engagement;
- Establish clear procedures to ensure all fora products and positions are developed with the fora members, even when processes are led by a Secretariat;
- Include and assess member engagement as a specific responsibility within each secretariat position's job description;
- Engage the Committee or wider membership in recruitment and decision-making.

### 5.5 Governance and accountability

- Establish clear, member-endorsed statutes or ToRs that define the fora's components;
- Establish clear, member-endorsed statutes or ToRs that define the fora's ways of working; decision-making; membership and leadership criteria, roles and responsibilities; grounds for termination; etc;
- Define a clear process for amending statutes and ToRs that includes member approval;
- Ensure that one representative from each member organisation has the mandate to make decisions and vote on behalf of the member organisation;
- Establish a clear ToR for the Executive/Steering Committee that includes steps to ensure the governing body is representative of the membership;
- Ensure Executive/Steering Committee members are fully aware of and monitored in their governance and accountability roles and responsibilities;
- Establish and enforce consequences for Executive/Steering Committee members who fail to meet their responsibilities;
- Support Executive/Steering Committee members through a clear orientation process;
- Schedule regular external audits and distribute audit reports to the membership;
- Schedule regular internal and external evaluations that involve members as key informants and distribute reports to the membership and other stakeholders;
- Ensure members provide feedback on fora operations, priorities, activities and ways of working through annual member surveys, scheduled work-plan reviews, individual member meetings, etc.;
- Ensure the membership conducts periodic reviews of the governance arrangement.



## 5.6 Member induction

- Include a written overview of the fora that includes:
  - Mandate, vision and mission;
  - Principles and values;
  - Fora statutes or/and ToR;
  - Member code of conduct (that will have been signed at the time of application);
  - Structure;
  - Representation matrix (the staff or/and members that represent the fora at standing and special meetings); and
  - Organisational diagram.
- Provide written member responsibilities;
- Provide a written overview of key services including:
  - General member meetings;
  - Working groups on specific topics;
  - Ongoing coordination and networking with UN agencies, government departments, donors and other stakeholders;
  - Support and advice;
  - Representation;
  - Joint advocacy and communications;
  - Coordination and information;
  - Research and assessments; and
  - Thematic meetings.
- Provide written descriptions and schedules of general and working group meetings;
- Provide contact lists for membership, Executive/Steering Committee and Secretariat.

## 5.7 Information management

- Develop a fora website with a password-protected area for storing member documents and records;
- Create a shared online filing and storage system such as Dropbox, Onedrive, or Google drive;
- Develop a series of fora-branded templates to enable consistency in products whether they are developed by fora members or the Secretariat;
- Create and distribute well-designed member profiles, good practice case studies, NGO presence mapping, etc. to engage existing members and attract new ones;
- Implement a simple data protection policy for all staff and members that includes:
  - Specific practices and guidelines for collecting, storing, sharing, and using membership details and other data;
  - The fora's commitment to only use information shared by members for the purpose for which the information was requested and collected;
  - The fora's commitment to aggregate all information shared by members without making reference to any individual NGO member without their explicit, written and informed consent;
  - The fora's commitment not to name or refer to individual members when discussing incidents or situations in internal or external meetings, whether with individuals, groups, members, partners or wider parties.

## 5.8 Effective meetings

- Create agendas with clear objectives and expected outcomes;
- Send invitations and agendas well in advance of meetings;
- Hold meetings in safe, accessible locations;
- Consider using technology to maximise member participation (e.g. Skype, webcasts, etc.);
- Ensure meetings respect time limits while also offering the flexibility to adapt the agenda for priority issues that may arise during the meeting;
- Promote inclusiveness by providing interpreters and reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities;
- Facilitate meetings in a way that encourages all members to participate freely, keeps the meeting to the allocated time, and promotes clear outcomes and conclusions;
- Conclude meetings by reviewing the decisions, conclusions, and next steps agreed upon by the members;
- Document meetings with short, clear minutes and action points and share them with participants for review within a reasonable timeframe.

## 5.9 Fora representation

- Assign representatives to standing meetings through a clear, transparent, pre-determined process that is endorsed by the General Assembly;
- Ensure representatives attend meetings and groups that reflect the goals and objectives of the fora;
- Monitor representatives to ensure they are meeting the minimum defined commitment to maintain their representative position;
- Ensure representatives further the interests of the fora as a whole, not those of their organisation or themselves;
- Ensure representatives submit notes of the meeting's key points to the fora's coordinator/director/chair by the end of the same day for circulation to the membership.

## 5.10 Measuring fora member engagement

- Identify and assess fora activities that achieve high and low engagement;
- Identify and assess members who are most/least engaged;
- Identify and support members who need to increase their engagement;
- Identify groups of members that may respond to tailored engagement opportunities;
- Monitor member adherence to engagement expectations or requirements;
- Assess whether members meet the criteria for certain functions (e.g. Does their level of engagement qualify them to run for the governance body?);
- Monitor the engagement and performance of governance bodies or fora representatives to ensure they meet the criteria to maintain the position;
- Use information on member engagement to help the membership make informed decisions when electing leadership or representation positions.

### 5.11 Member feedback

- Undertake a regular member and stakeholder satisfaction survey;
- Analyse and share data collected;
- Use findings of annual surveys to inform the priorities and ways of working of the fora;
- Establish and promote an effective member feedback system with multiple pathways for members, partners, stakeholders, and beneficiaries to report concerns or issues;
- Establish and implement a systematic approach for monitoring and improving the reporting mechanism?
- Develop and implement a secure, confidential system for collating data on complaints and reports;
- Publish regular, anonymised reports detailing the complaints received and the action taken.

### 5.12 Membership growth and retention

- Develop an accessible website with a clear section that explains how to become a member and includes:
  - Membership criteria;
  - Application process;
  - Application form;
  - Supporting documents; and
  - Contact information for membership questions and application submissions.
- Include a link in external products that connects to the website's membership page;
- Encourage members to raise awareness on the fora and refer partner organisations for membership;
- Implement projects that increase the visibility of member NGOs such as a directory of NGOs or collection of member profiles;
- Host meetings for organisations interested in joining;
- Offer one-time observation status for fora meetings;
- Issue annual membership certificates to increase the credibility of fora membership;
- Offer member-only capacity building activities and training courses.

### 5.13 NGO fora member engagement strategy

- Determine the type of member engagement strategy. Is member engagement an objective within the fora's overall strategic plan, or is it a stand-alone strategy/workplan?
- Define member engagement. What does it look like? How will it be measured?
- Assess member engagement. What is the base line? What will be measured, how often, and by whom? How does engagement compare between individual members and types of members?
- Define general objectives/goals. What are you seeking to achieve overall? What needs to be different in the future? How will the change in engagement it be measured?
- Define specific objectives/goals. What are the sub-objectives/goals that will need to be achieved to meet the general objectives/goals? When will they be achieved? Who is responsible for making it happen? How will they be measured?
- Establish a workplan. What are the concrete steps and measures that need to be taken to achieve the member engagement goals?
- Set a deadline. What is time frame for the overall strategy, for each specific objective/goal, and for each concrete step?
- Monitor and measure the workplan and strategy. How closely does the implementation follow the desired time frame?
- Monitor and measure member engagement levels. How well is the strategy working? What changes might need to be made to improve results?

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