Forced Migration Working Group
Online
30 November 2020 (14:30-16:00)


Agenda
1. IDPs and the High-Level Panel.
2. Discussion on the impact of the US Elections on Forced Migration.
3. AoB, including Access to vaccines for humanitarian workers and displaced populations; UN Migration Network; Rohingyas relocations in Bangladesh; some details on the High-Commissioner’s Dialogue; the re-election of Filippo Grandi as HC; 2020 UNGA Omnibus Resolution on the work of UNHCR.

1. IDPs and the High-Level Panel

- Early November, part of a series of bilateral exchanges between the Panel Secretariat and different stakeholders, a meeting took place between ICVA (Ignacio, Jérôme, and Loïse) and the High-Level Panel Secretariat (Secretary and the Head of stakeholder engagement). Quick notes of the meeting have been shared with members.
- Main points of the meeting were the meaning of the extension of the Panel for them and for the stakeholders, revising their work plan.
- There is still time for NGOs to engage, send additional written submissions, develop new initiatives, probably up to March 2021.
- The themes they are particularly interested in to see develop, in the sense that these are not addressed enough, are COVID-19 impact on IDP response; the gap on fragility and poverty context; issue of humanitarian financing for IDP response.
- On consultations with affected communities. The Panel thanks NGOs’ support on the ground. There is a dedicated Panel webpage with few country reports, accessible here.
- The Panel is looking for more in terms of credibility regarding direct interaction with IDPs. ICVA suggested to the Panel to build on what has been done already with NGOs on the ground with the consultations and identify with NGOs whom to engage with virtually or in person in case travels are possible in some contexts (bearing in mind do no harm).
- Remind ICVA spark role in bringing NGOs together with the Panel during meetings we organized earlier this year. More information here.
- ICVA followed-up after the meeting early November by e-mail with the idea to organize another meeting through ICVA between NGOs and the Panel Secretariat, possibly to take stock at Geneva level on the consultations and look at options going forward. We still wait for an answer at this stage and will keep NGOs informed.
- Welcome NGOs suggestions.

CARE
- On the consultations, would it be worth to get additional inputs? How helpful NGOs can respond to Panel Secretariat concerns? E.g., Are there countries where there are more gaps than others? E.g., CARE in South Sudan was involved in the consultation with IDPs and it has been comprehensive.
- Wondering if the NGOs and other stakeholders that worked on specific consultations and have a report could propose to organize 1/1.5-hour webinar for each country, bring together
some of the respondents from IDP communities with some Panel members? Same group that led the consultation and produce the reports can try to organize it.

ICVA

- Suggest CARE reach out to Giovanni Cassani and convey the message that NGOs and other stakeholders involved in the consultations could help organize direct exchanges between communities and the Panel. You can suggest that ICVA can help. This is a message ICVA has already conveyed to Giovanni and can repeat.
- The message from the Panel Secretariat was not necessarily that they want to go deeper in discussing with communities (though it would be useful to investigate this) but rather a concern about the credibility issue if, at the end of the mandate, they have not engaged or been seen to engage directly with affected population. So they are grateful for the help and inputs from NGOs and UN Agencies but also seek ways to have direct interactions with communities despite the COVID-19 context.
- ICVA will suggest again to Giovanni Cassani that NGOs involved in the consultations are well placed to organize another meeting based on the findings of the consultations.

Update on IDP camps closures in Iraq.

- ICVA shared by e-mail a few references on the camp closures in Iraq. We received a request from NGOs based in Iraq to organize quickly a briefing in November. Will share with you the PPT and a background position paper as of 15 Nov.
- The idea of the briefing was to press messages to the donor’s community that since 2019, the Government in Iraq has embarked on IDP camp closures, it has accelerated the past weeks, leading to 120,000 forced return of IDPs. With 240,000 additional IDPs that could be at risk of return with new camps’ closure.
- We learned that current return is not aligned with the principled return framework; lack of planning, lack of coordination, no clear plan for the foreseeable future on those closures; high-risk of intercommunal tension. A lot of IDPs are or perceived to be affiliated with “ISIS” and at risk of secondary displacement and other issues.
- Follow-up: ICVA tries to ensure it is not a one-off briefing, because we feel it is better not to jump from one topic to the other without any follow-up (although you may advise us that, sometimes, our role can simply be to help bring the spotlights on an issue, and then move on). We will therefore see what is possible to do with NGOs based in Iraq, although taking into account available resources and priorities.
- Flag that it is the kind of activity ICVA can do. If there is a need in 2021, we welcome your suggestion. Seeing it as a collective with the support of NGOs based in Iraq, based in Geneva, our ICVA Deputy Representative colleague in Aman, rather than ICVA delivering a service.
- E.g., in 2019-2020, we did several briefings on Venezuela and Syria too, at the initiative of ICVA members. Important for you to flag what the needs are and critical action needed.

Save the children

- Thank ICVA for organizing the briefing at such short notice. Good attendance and interest from Member States.
- Great if ICVA can continue to support the work on IDPs in Iraq and Save can continue to support as well. Recently, advocacy in Iraq has been reactive rather than proactive.

Intersos

- Second Save’s message. Would be great to continue this kind of initiative from ICVA even though not exactly ‘policy work’.
ICVA

- The reactive advocacy position rather than proactive is linked with Government of Iraq lack of informed plan and lack of coordination.

2. Discussion on the impact of the US Elections on Forced Migration

- We can of course expect radical change on the posture and methodology, foreign policy, the world vision and we can expect positive changes issues such as the US-Mexico situation, the situation of migrants and refugees in the US, the revival of the refugee system.
- But there are also a lot of question marks about how things will evolve, how fast can a Biden administration undo the Trump Legacy, how much damage has been done and what can be repaired, what are the direct implications for NGOs’ work, what should we take into account in our own planning?
- We thought it would be useful to have a first collective brainstorming on all this, possibly opening to follow-up discussions/reflections.
- ICVA offered some brief remarks on:
  1) Situation with the Senate. Elections for the last seats will take place in January. this will affect what the Biden administration can do although Biden can also work through Executive Orders in a similar way that Trump did. This means the Congress would not necessarily be as important?
  2) Can we expect a meaningful return to international agreements? E.g., Paris agreement, what does that mean in addressing climate and disaster-induced displacement? E.g., What about the Global Compact on Migration (GCM), US did not engage and sign it, could we expect any changes? Can we expect changes in terms of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)? Treaties and relations with the UN system (WHO, etc.).
  3) On funding, can we expect change and improvement to humanitarian funding, to UN Agencies, NGOs? Where does PRM stand after 4 rough years under Trump, with much talk about its reform/merging with USAID? What are the implications of a Biden administration for NGO funding?
  4) Dynamics with the US diplomacy, e.g., will we have a new ambassador in Geneva and what does it mean worldwide? What can we foresee in terms of relations with the US Mission in Geneva and other diplomatic postings worldwide?

Good Neighbors International

- Question to colleagues avid with US news during the last month and familiar with US Aid fora: Beyond Kerry, are there names among the cabinet nominees that ring a positive bell?

ICVA

- The nominees for the Secretary of State and the UN Ambassador have positive background (see articles shared in advance of this meeting).
- The Homeland Security nominee is Alejandro Mayorkas and seen a tweet indicating that he is a board member of HIAS, which is clearly a good indication. Reports indicate he will likely change immigration policies affecting children and youth in the US and will revive the US refugee program.
- More information and analysis from NGOs?

HIAS

- Excited that Mayorkas is nominated, waiting for the confirmation. Pleased to see the other nominees, for most of them.
- One thing important to keep in mind is how much damage has been done the past four years and how much time it is going to take to fix it.

Notes for ICVA Members only – not to be circulated to other parties
• There are indications that the new administration brings up the GCR and GRF in their preliminary discussions with stakeholders, with a willingness of being more engaged and involved in that. Have not heard about the GCM.
• Funding for NGOs and the UN has to deal with Congress as well. Discussions are under-way.
• During his campaign Biden announced he would raise the US refugee resettlement quota to 125,000 places. Right now, Trump’s places were 15,000. Biden will be able to change that number. This is an aspirational number considering what happened to the US resettlement system.

ICVA
• How much and deep destruction to the refugee system has been made is a good question, beyond statistics and objectives, for example, how many staff had to move to something else, how much the system has been changed?
• ICVA suggest follow-up, if it is of interest to members, we can try to follow-up, we can try to elaborate more and see if there is a need to zoom in at least on the refugee system and resettlement in a further meeting. We can have a more focused meeting, not necessarily only among us. We could also try to engage the US Mission in Geneva informally, when the time is ripe.
• One other aspect ICVA will follow-up, in relation to the work we do on the GCR, is the focus on Solutions and engagement with the development of the 3-Year Strategy on resettlement and complementary pathways and the dire situation of resettlement in 2020.
• Discussion recently with UNHCR on 3-years Strategy, before the election, showed that there are high hopes that big change will happen. At the same time, we have the feeling that we shouldn’t forget the notion that it is always “good to not put all the eggs in the same basket” and diversifying the pool of resettlement countries should remain an important objective.
• ICVA continues to engage with the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement in 2021. It will be happening in Geneva, co-chaired by Switzerland, the Swiss Council of Refugees, and UNHCR. The first concept note has been shared. Will keep NGOs informed.
• Welcome your suggestions.

Act Alliance
• There has been a lot of damage in the past four years, the steps that need to be taken are numerous. A lot can be done by executive order, and other that will need to be addressed by Congress such as funding.
• A lot of current discussions is about resettlement.
• Some expectation to get improvement at the borders.
• We are interested in and we look for information on whether the US will be entering in the GCM and what does that mean? E.g., will they be able to contribute to the review in 2022?
• Hearing from ACT members that migration is difficult to navigate and not necessarily on the top of political agenda. It will be easier in that sense to navigate with refugees’ issues.
• About climate change, positive indication from the new administration, including on displacement. Advice NGOs to not end up with initiatives that will target only ‘climate refugees’ while not addressing what needs to be done to climate change.
• On the policy front, it will be difficult to exchange, we have to be cautious, modest and it will be good to have a long-term plan.
• What we can expect for the US engaging in the multilateral system over policies is something that we will have to think of too.

ICVA
• Will do our best to feed NGO reflections and see which analysis documents we can share.
• Welcome your analyses as well.

Save the children
• Confirm your proposition to explore more and reach out the US delegation at Geneva level is a good idea. Happy to get to Save US colleagues’ insights on it.

International Catholic Migration Commission
• Agree

3. AoB
• Access to vaccine for humanitarian workers and displaced population

Good Neighbors International
• Based on WHO’s “Roadmap For Prioritizing Uses Of COVID-19 Vaccines In The Context Of Limited Supply” accessible here, the realistic scenario that concerned us is p.14-15 and it clearly mentions, among the significant higher risk group, refugees, IDPs, and migrants. However, we do not know in practice how it will be prioritized.
• Bring the issue because the document has a series of recommendations, it is up to the government and public authorities in each country to set how and whom they will be prioritizing in terms of vaccination.
• Think about three key messages:
  1) The possible risk of discrimination between the host population and displaced population. We should amplify that it is important to see vulnerable group and health workers in refugee settings that are equally prioritized with other groups.
  2) Aid workers: The document mentions there are “other essential workers outside health and education sectors” that must be prioritized too. There are examples but it is not an exhaustive list. Aid workers are not mentioned in the list. We need collaboration between e.g. UNHCR, NGOs and humanitarian organizations to add aid workers to the list of other essential workers, outside health and education sectors.
  3) As my role at Geneva level is to support my regional offices. How this distribution of prioritization will be in the hand of local authority? At Geneva level, we could reach CAGI to put humanitarian workers as a priority group so we can travel to the field to support different operations in the field.
• Welcome your suggestions.

ICVA
• Wondering what UNHCR is planning, in relation to the all work of COVID-19 and the inclusion chapter of the GRF. Would be interested to engage with UNHCR on it.
• Suggest GNI brings the issue to our ICVA colleague, Head of Humanitarian Coordination too.
• We had another UNHCR-NGO Europe thematic meeting. An NGO raised the question of access for displaced population. The Deputy Director of Regional Bureau of Europe shared the information that Filippo Grandi is already advocating for access to vaccines whether it is UN or NGOs on the ground. We don’t have further details and we do not know at which levels Filippo Grandi is advocating with.
• Recall or inform also NGOs that a question was raised about vaccines to displaced population during the session on resilience and inclusion of the HC’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges. Answer from UNHCR was that at global level, UNHCR is a member of the technical group of IASC on COVID-19 in humanitarian settings and is working within the group to ensure an appropriate mechanism to ensure equitable access to refugees and host communities. UNHCR also mentioned that at country level, they are participating in
discussion with Ministries and notably with Ministry from Health, WHO, UNICEF, on vaccines strategy.

- ICVA flag that during the HC Dialogue closing session, it is possible to share a statement and/or raise questions in advance while registering and/or during the sessions. As suggested by Women’s Refugee Commission at the last Forced Migration Working Group, NGOs could share in advance to ICVA, what your key priorities, questions, messages are so that we coordinate a collective emphasis, amplify. We can collect it and share it in advance with you so you can raise it. We can amplify the three priorities raised by GNI for example during the session of 9 December.
- Welcome further or other ideas.

- UN Migration Network
- Act Alliance
- Working groups wrapping up will be continuing to work until first quarter of next year, a tool is coming up with a questionnaire, looking at strengthening and diverse regular pathways, to address vulnerabilities in migration. Intersection with refugees.
- Second annual meeting on 15-16 December. In the future, will be happy to give an overview more detailed on the topic.

- Relocation of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh
- The Government of Bangladesh has called for a meeting with NGOs last week to discuss to discuss the future potential of increasing the number of Rohingyas to Bhasan Char. We are trying to see with our members what our reactions have been. Initial reaction was that we still do not have an assessment. There is pressure, especially on local NGOs to increase relocation in the future. Any information or opinion on that?

ICVA
- On the GCM, happy to have the topic on a full agenda item and not only as AoB.
- On Bangladesh, we can reach UNHCR to get further information if useful but would need your specific asks.

Save the children
- On the relocation, happy to have a follow-up with those interested. The relocation is also a big worry for Save the children. A small group of NGOs – Oxfam, CARE, World Vision, Save – have been trying to sustain advocacy on the Rohingyas crisis in the last two years. IRC also joined the effort at Geneva level. It is very much on our agenda to do further advocacy on the topic notably with the US mission. US was the host of the last donor conference.
- We are in contact with UNHCR Regional Liaison Officer for Asia and the Pacific in Geneva.

ICVA
- On the HC’s Dialogue, last session is on 9 December. It is supposed to be built on best practices on the response to the pandemic and related to the GCR, refugees’ voices, and UNHCR-NGO Annual Consultations. We can wonder how UNHCR will deal with all the information received and how they might prioritize it and it is the same for the outcome document. Regarding the Annual Consultations in particular, many NGOs shared inputs, flag that it is easy way to raise, mention some of the recommendations while you register and/or during the Q&A. Same approach is valid for the session on Climate Change.

Act Alliance
- Can we still submit a statement after a session?
ICVA

- Would say best is to check with UNHCR. It is certainly possible. UNHCR plans to put the draft outcome document of the HC Dialogue during the session on 9 December and will provide time to feed into and then they will finalize it later.
- Re-election of Grandi as HC on 23 November. Interesting element that it is for a half term on his demand. Meaning he will leave before the second GRF.
- 2020 UNGA Omnibus Resolution on the work of UNHCR. Draft available here: A/C.3/75/L.48. A number of interesting parts related to the GCR. Once again, not adopted by consensus in Geneva, no opposition to the text but abstentions. Will report to the group if further information could be of the interest of NGOs.
- NGOs and UNHCR exchange on operational and policy priorities at Europe level will continue, built on previous meetings/regional dialogues of this year. The next meeting might be on 8 December (tbc) and one of the agenda items might be around 2021 UNHCR-NGO Annual Consultations. UNHCR will look for NGOs feedback.
- There will be a break in December with no monthly Forced Migration Working Group.