

# ICVA 2019-2021 STRATEGY



A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK  
FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE  
HUMANITARIAN ACTION

# OBJECTIVE OF THE STRATEGY

This 2019-2021 strategy is meant to set the direction and focus of ICVA's work. It encapsulates our vision, recognises our unique and diverse membership, and illustrates the engagement between the Secretariat and members on key focus areas to better enable humanitarian response. It guides the ICVA Secretariat's workplans and allocation of resources.

We recognise that humanitarian action is part of a constantly changing landscape, posing new challenges and prompting new approaches. This strategy, therefore, aims to define our direction and guide decisions to achieve our vision while leaving space for any needed adaptations.

We can only achieve our potential with the active engagement of the ICVA members. We are therefore grateful to the many members and partners who contributed to the development of this strategy through interviews, focus group discussions and surveys.

## Connecting –

NGO voices to global, regional and country-level policy development

## Including –

diverse NGOs from around the world (national, international, and NGO Fora)

## Respecting –

the Humanitarian Principles and Principles of Partnership

## Supporting –

NGO understanding and engagement in an increasingly complex world

# 1 WHY DO WE NEED ICVA?

NGOs are critical to the delivery of effective, principled humanitarian assistance. They witness the needs. They implement the majority of projects. They advocate for needed changes. Connecting their voices to policies and operations and investing in their capacities will ultimately improve support for people affected by crises.

# 2 WHO IS ICVA?

ICVA has over 100 members operating in 160 countries. 75% of NGOs engaged in ICVA activities are southern NGOs, national NGOs, medium-sized NGOs and NGO Fora. The Secretariat is present in Geneva, Africa, Asia and the Middle East and North Africa.

# 3 WHAT ARE ICVA'S FOCUS AREAS?

- Forced Migration
- Financing
- Coordination
- Navigating Change (Cross-Cutting Issues)

# 4 HOW DOES ICVA WORK?

- Analyse & Explain
- Influence & Advocate
- Convene
- Support
- Connect

# 5 ENABLING THE STRATEGY

# 6 MEASURE AND MONITOR THE IMPACT

# 1

# WHY DO WE NEED ICVA?

In 1962 a small coalition of refugee and migration-focused NGOs joined together to collectively tackle the challenges of forced migration.

From these beginnings, we have grown into a global network of national, regional and international NGOs dedicated to working collectively to make humanitarian action more principled and effective.

Today the world is grappling with the largest number of displaced people since World War II. As NGOs adapt to the intensification of natural disasters due to climate change, they also find themselves in increasingly prolonged conflict settings due to the shifting geopolitical landscape. Fundamental refugee protection and respect for international humanitarian law and multilateralism are alarmingly under threat. Over 135 million people across the world – women, girls, men and boys – urgently require humanitarian assistance and protection.

NGOs are witnessing the needs, implementing some three-quarters of all aid, and advocating for much-needed changes. They carry out their work in a system that is challenged by complex relationships: relationships between governments and civil society;

between donors and implementers; between UN and non-UN agencies; and between local, national, regional and international actors. Interactions can often be transactional and competitive, rather than reciprocal and collective. As the “ecosystem” of actors responding to crises becomes more diverse, the systems supporting humanitarian action become more complex and bureaucratic. As the operating environment becomes more difficult to navigate, the expectations placed upon humanitarian actors continue to mount.

ICVA helps NGOs understand, engage and influence the humanitarian sector and beyond. Through our network, members from across the globe with a broad range of perspectives come together to share and exchange experiences and information, collaborate on common issues, leverage expertise, and harness varying perspectives to both challenge and inspire each other. ICVA acts as a bridge connecting these voices, some of which would not otherwise be heard, to influence other actors, including the UN, governments and regional organisations, for more principled and effective humanitarian action.

# 2 WHO IS ICVA?

ICVA helps NGOs understand, engage and influence the humanitarian sector and beyond.

ICVA has over 100 NGO members operating in 160 countries. They are a mix of secular and faith-based, national and international, large and small NGOs. Our members have their own decision-making processes, cultures, priorities and approaches. However, they all share one thing in common: a commitment to principled and effective humanitarian action and a vision of a world in which crisis-affected populations are effectively protected, assisted and enabled to rebuild their lives and livelihoods with dignity.

75% of NGOs engaged in ICVA activities are southern NGOs, national NGOs, medium-sized NGOs and NGO Fora. While our membership may vary widely in size and scope, they share an equal voice at ICVA and we endeavour to find ways for all members to participate and enjoy the benefits of membership. We will continue to encourage NGOs from across the globe to join our network as we strive to be a truly global humanitarian network.

Our Secretariat is based in Geneva, giving proximity to global humanitarian debates and decision making. We complement this presence in Geneva through Regional Representatives, providing an important link between global and regional perspectives and ensuring a connection to the operational realities of our members. We also invest in support to country-level NGO Fora operating in humanitarian contexts.

ICVA serves as a key “bridge” supporting NGO engagement with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), including through facilitating the development of NGO statements at UNHCR’s governing board meetings and co-organising with UNHCR of the UNHCR-NGO Annual Consultations. ICVA has been increasingly requested to help NGOs engage the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the UN Officer for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the UN International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the UN World Food Program (WFP) and others. ICVA is a Standing Invitee in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) that brings together UN agencies, the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, NGOs and the World Bank to develop policies and make important policy and operational decisions. ICVA is increasingly promoting NGO engagement with regional bodies and states (donors and host governments).

## Our Values & Principles

- Our work is based on the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence as well as the Principles of Partnership.
- We work towards a system that enables people affected by humanitarian crises to receive equitable access to quality assistance and protection.
- We promote innovative approaches to humanitarian policy development and implementation and offer evidence-based, solutions-oriented advocacy.
- We promote equitable engagement of NGOs to make the humanitarian system more inclusive.

# 3 WHAT ARE ICVA'S FOCUS AREAS?

ICVA's thematic focus areas are vehicles for members to work together on issues of common concern.

## Forced Migration

Forced migration was ICVA's first focus area in 1962, and remains just as critical today. ICVA facilitates NGO statements for UNHCR's governing board meetings and co-organises NGO consultations with UNHCR and IOM. In the past five years, ICVA has invested in improved partnership between UNHCR and NGOs. Since the adoption of the New York Declaration, ICVA has been a key actor in ensuring NGO understanding of, participation in, and contribution to the process of developing a Global Compact on Refugees and the roll-out of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF).

Our **objective** by 2021 is to improve protection, assistance and durable solutions for refugees, IDPs, stateless persons and migrants in vulnerable situations.

**ICVA will achieve this** by supporting NGO understanding of, engagement with, and influence related to UNHCR, IOM and other key stakeholders (including states and regional actors).

A **key platform** for members to engage is ICVA's Forced Displacement Working Group (which would be re-named as the Forced Migration Working Group).

### Example of ICVA in 2018:

ICVA supports NGO engagement in the development of a Global Compact on Refugees at the country, regional and global levels.

### Paper - The Global Compact on Refugees: Explained

### What's new in 2019-2021?

While maintaining its dedication to refugees, IDPs and stateless persons, ICVA will strive for more consistency, coherence and complementarity with processes related to vulnerable migrants.

# Coordination

NGOs operate in a complex space involving many actors. A variety of coordination mechanisms have been created to help different actors operate more efficiently and effectively in relation to one another. However, it can be challenging to understand and engage these mechanisms.

Our **objective by 2021** is to strengthen the collective ability of NGOs to actively engaged in and influence coordination mechanisms to ensure they are inclusive, contextualised and provide effective assistance and protection to those affected by crises.

**ICVA will achieve this** by supporting NGO engagement in existing coordination mechanisms at the global, regional and country levels. At the time of writing, ICVA and its members were engaged in the IASC Principals group, the Emergency Directors Group, the Working Group (developing policies), a variety of subsidiary bodies, and regional IASC groups. ICVA believes that effective collective action in complex humanitarian contexts is critical. ICVA will intensify its investments in supporting NGO Fora operating in these contexts to contribute to improving humanitarian operations, and will continue exploring alternative models of coordination to strengthen effective and principled delivery of humanitarian assistance.

A **key platform** for members to engage is ICVA's Humanitarian Coordination Working Group.

## Example of ICVA in 2018:

ICVA promotes dialogue between NGOs, Humanitarian Coordinators and Deputy Humanitarian Coordinators and provides NGO inputs into HC performance appraisals.

## Study - The Role of the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator

### What's New in 2019-2021?

While maintaining its role in relation to existing coordination mechanisms, ICVA will intensify its investments in country-level NGO Fora and increase exploration of alternative models.

# Financing

The humanitarian sector faces a global funding shortfall of nearly 60%. Although NGOs are essential actors in delivering aid, they struggle to obtain direct, adequate, accessible, sustainable, and flexible funding. Moreover, conditions attached to funds are increasingly cumbersome. Such challenges are particularly acute for local and national NGOs. Although funding decisions should be driven by the humanitarian imperative they appear to be at increasing risk of politicisation.

Our **objective by 2021** is to ensure humanitarian financing meets the needs of populations affected by crises while ensuring adequate NGO access to principled, quality funding.

**ICVA will achieve this** by supporting NGO understanding of, engagement with, and influence **related to processes and developments in the financing arena.**

**Key platforms** for members to engage are ICVA's Humanitarian Financing Working Group and Donor Conditions Task Force. We also support NGO engagement in the Pooled Fund Working Group and OCHA-NGO Platform for Country-Based Pooled Funds.

## Example of ICVA in 2018:

ICVA advances implementation of the Grand Bargain for Humanitarian Financing, particularly the workstreams related to localisation and donor conditions.

## Paper - The Grand Bargain: Explained

## What's New in 2019-2021?

ICVA will promote NGO collaboration to deepen and widen the resource base for humanitarian action (e.g. through new kinds of partnerships and innovation).

# Navigating Change, Cross-Cutting Issues

The environments in which NGOs operate are fundamentally changing. In many places, respect for humanitarian principles is eroding, and so too is NGOs' space to operate. The pressure for humanitarians to align with development and peace priorities is mounting. As NGOs compete for scarce resources, schisms in the community have emerged, particularly related to localisation. These trends require safe spaces for diverse NGOs to come together to discuss their differences, learn from one another, and consider solutions and help one another.

Our **objective by 2021** is to ensure a dynamic support to NGOs in developing strategic thinking and in navigating change while promoting humanitarian principles and the Principles of Partnership.

**ICVA will achieve this by:** 1) providing various platforms for NGOs for peer exchanges and 2) strategically engaging multilateral partners (e.g. UN agencies and the World Bank), member states, donors, regional bodies, the private sector, and other networks outside the humanitarian sector who can support the network.

**Key platforms** for members to engage will be ICVA's Policy Working Group and Regional Working Groups.

## Examples of ICVA in 2018:

ICVA advances NGO perspectives in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

## Paper- The New Way of Working: Examined

## What's New in 2019-2021:

ICVA will build alliances to support NGO capacity to navigate changes.

# 4

## HOW DOES ICVA WORK?

Across all focus areas, and at all levels – global, regional, and when possible country levels – ICVA carries out the following activities with specific expected results.

### Analysing and Explaining

- **Approach to implementation:** Producing, sharing and exchanging information, analyses, and learning opportunities.
- **Examples:** Monthly Bulletins, briefing papers, email updates, and the ICVA-PHAP Learning Stream.
- **Expected result:** NGOs have increased understanding of the humanitarian sector policies and processes.

### Convening

- **Approach to implementation:** Facilitating, organising, and convening meetings, workshops, discussions and debates for members to exchange experiences and information, collaborate on common issues, leverage expertise and bring together varying perspectives.

- **Examples:** Supporting regular meetings of Thematic and Regional Working Groups; organising the ICVA Annual Conference; supporting alliances, like the Civil Society Action Committee on the Migration and Refugee Compacts.
- **Expected result:** NGOs have increased opportunities to participate in platforms for engagement on important humanitarian issues.

### Connecting

- **Approach to implementation:** Facilitating increased NGO access to important stakeholders, including multilateral partners (e.g. UN agencies and the World Bank), member states, donors, regional bodies, the private sector, and other networks outside the humanitarian sector.
- **Examples:** Supporting NGO meetings with and feedback to UN agencies, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators, the World Bank, donors, regional bodies; co-organising with UNHCR the UNHCR-NGO Annual Consultations.
- **Expected result:** NGOs have increased access to various stakeholders affecting humanitarian action.

## Influencing & Advocating

- **Approach to implementation:** Ensuring a strong and multi-faceted NGO voice is reflected in key debates and decision-making forums that affect humanitarian action.
- **Examples:** Facilitating joint NGO statements, co-organising “NGOs Forward” briefings for member states featuring different NGO perspectives, the Less Paper More Aid project.
- **Expected result:** NGOs have increased opportunities to contribute and influence humanitarian policies and practices.

## Supporting

- **Approach to implementation:** Strengthening the capacities of NGOs to engage in the humanitarian system.
- **Examples:** The NGO Fora Support Project, responding to NGO queries for information and advice, funding member travel to speak at important events.
- **Expected result:** NGOs demonstrate increased capacity to engage in the sector.

# 5 ENABLING THE STRATEGY

This 2019-2021 overarching strategy provides the framework to develop ICVA's supporting strategies and annual workplans.

In 2018, the ICVA Secretariat is based in Geneva and has Regional Representatives in Asia (Bangkok), MENA (Amman) and Africa (Nairobi and Addis Ababa). ICVA also receives support from the Less Paper More Aid Project Coordinator.

We will develop a **human resources strategy** to ensure our staffing is in the right place with the right skills set. We will strengthen the tools we use to support the interaction between staff members located around the world.

We will review our **communications strategy** to ensure our members and partners have better access to relevant and up-to-date information about our work and its impact. As part of this, ICVA will define its voice and clarify its approach to advocacy.

We will review our **membership strategy**, considering ways to improve the communication with and collaboration among our members. This will provide further clarity on how we engage, process and amplify membership views' and voices'. It will articulate approaches to the administration of membership services (from recruitment, to validation, to orientation), while ensuring continued prioritisation of maintaining diversity within the membership.

We will develop a **fundraising strategy** to find reliable and diversified funding that would ensure sustainability and flexibility to adapt to new developments.

We will continue to improve our **governance and accountability mechanisms** to clarify roles and responsibilities, adhere to transparent decision-making processes, and ensure program delivery is carried out in line with the agreed strategy.

Based on all of the above, we will develop **annual workplans** to implement the strategy, recognising that plans will evolve over time to adapt to new developments.

# 6 MEASURE AND MONITOR THE IMPACT

We will measure and report on performance targets and indicators and regularly commission external, independent assessments of our work and impact. Nevertheless, the issue of goals, measurable indicators and steering remains an area for improvement.

By 2021, our objective for steering is to have an effective steering system informed by quantitative and qualitative indicators from the four focus areas. The system will enable logical and structured coordination across the focus areas, and at all levels (global, regional and country levels). Responsibilities and processes will be managed and complied with.



**Vision:** A world in which crisis-affected populations are effectively protected, assisted and enabled to rebuild their lives and livelihoods with dignity.

**Mission:** A global network of non-governmental organisations whose mission is to make humanitarian action more principled and effective by working collectively and independently to influence policy and practice.



[www.icvanetwork.org](http://www.icvanetwork.org)

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