



A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK
FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE
HUMANITARIAN ACTION

ICVA Asia and the Pacific Regional Hub

Regional Direction and Achievements
2019-2020

February 2021

ICVA Asia and the Pacific Overview

ICVA's regional hubs in Africa, Asia and the Pacific and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), established in 2013, foster proximity to members, NGO networks and partners in the region; expand representation to regional humanitarian and political actors; strengthen links between field realities and global policies and strengthen support and collective advocacy. In 2019-2020 the Asia hub was managed by the Asia Regional and Deputy Regional Representatives based in Bangkok, Thailand.

ICVA's work in Asia and the Pacific region responds to the unique humanitarian setting where the impact of natural disasters, conflict-related displacement, resource scarcity, climate change and population density interact.

Asia-Pacific is the world's most disaster-prone region. On average, almost fifty percent of the world's disasters each year are concentrated in Asia. Over the past decade, most countries in the region have established national disaster management authorities and systems that are increasingly capable of managing an effective disaster response. In addition, the growing prominence of bilateral response arrangements (South-South Cooperation) and the increased capacity of regional organisations are contributing to a more diverse response system. As a result, disaster management and response in the region is based on strong national leadership, particularly in the context of natural disasters, with regional and international actors providing support and complementing Government efforts when required.

Asia hosts the world's largest refugee camp, Kutupalong-Balukhali camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Engagement related to refugee policy is complicated in the region, reflecting the fact that many countries in the region are not signatories to the 1951 convention. Other areas of forced migration, particularly internal displacement and statelessness are also central issues.

Asia is also home to some of the world's most protracted internal conflict settings, including Afghanistan, Myanmar and parts of the Philippines. In these settings, efforts towards realising a humanitarian, peace and development Nexus are particularly important.

A new factor is the intersection of natural and person-made disasters. Recent large scale flooding due to dam collapses or mismanagement in India and Laos, have highlighted the potential challenging impact major infrastructure projects may have when combined with increasing population density, weather and climate change factors.

National humanitarian ecosystems are rich across the region, including not only the Government, but also the 'whole of society' - NGOs, the private sector, the military, civil society, and affected communities themselves. In an increasing number of contexts, governments are actively restricting the engagement of international actors, even in what would have previously been international-level situations.

The humanitarian context in Asia necessitates collective NGO coordination, advocacy, and discussion across a range of priorities. The direction and achievements of ICVA in the region in 2019-2020, structured by the ICVA focus areas, are defined below.

Achievements and challenges

Focus Area One: Forced Migration

ICVA Global Outcome: Improved protection, assistance and durable solutions for refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and migrants in vulnerable situations.

In the Asia-Pacific Region, ICVA aimed to help NGOs to improve their understanding in the frameworks, terminologies, and mechanisms related to forced migration in the region and support NGO understanding of, engagement with and influence of key regional stakeholders. These include UNHCR, IOM, Donor Governments, Host Governments and Regional Actors. Priorities included: Improve strategic partnership with Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN); Follow key Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) examples: the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) roll out in Afghanistan and the Solidarity Approach in Myanmar/Bangladesh; Engage proactively in UNHCR Regionalisation.

In 2019-2020 ICVA Asia-Pacific has:

- **Actively engaged and invested in the UNHCR regionalisation process resulting in enhanced relations with the newly established UNHCR Asia bureau and improved NGO understanding of UNHCR regionalisation and potential collaboration areas.** ICVA Asia-Pacific engaged in closed-door sessions with UNHCR and a small number of NGOs to discuss key areas and hosted one briefing session (Jan 2020) for members and partners and bilateral briefings with NGO Networks and members on the UNHCR regionalisation process and priority areas.
- **Directly supported the UNHCR Regional NGO consultations meeting process** (Feb- March 2020) including five planning meetings with UNHCR and Asian Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN), building collaboration and trust with the regional UNHCR bureau.
- **Coordinated with APRRN and used ICVA's convening power to collaborate with UNHCR and organise joint events to enable NGOs to engage with UNHCR and influence regional policy and practice.** For example the NGO-UNHCR meetings on COVID-19 response - in April and October 2020, two virtual meetings were held with Asia NGOs on funding flexibility and the COVID-19 response. Meetings resulted in: 1) an Improved information sharing and feedback mechanism for better and more effective programs and/or aid services to refugees; 2) improved connections between UNHCR and NGOs; and, 3) improved relationship between ICVA, APRRN and UNHCR.
- **Facilitated the collection of input from NGOs and direct advocacy with decision makers and donors for UNHCR's high-level panel on Support Platform for Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR)** (July 2020). Input was collected from NGOs/networks in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran and voiced by ICVA's Executive Director who participated in the high-level panel. Written inputs and statements were shared on ICVA website and directly with UNHCR and other stakeholders. Collective voices of NGOs on SSAR was put forward directly to the decision makers and donors.
- Collaborated with UNHCR and APRRN to conduct a follow-up virtual dialogue with members of ICVA and APRRN working in SSAR platform countries (Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan) on updates to the platform, NGO engagement in the projects and key issues for attention (December 2020). The dialogue highlighted the value in creating a space for the discussion to continue.

In 2021 ICVA Asia-Pacific will continue to strengthen relations with the Asia UNHCR bureau and collaborate and connect with APRRN to engage and provide opportunities for NGOs to

influence regional forced migration policy and practice. Currently ICVA Asia-Pacific monitors impact based on opportunities made for NGOs to engage and influence, in 2021 ICVA Asia-Pacific will consider possibilities to also monitor at the outcome level in terms of policy and practice influence.

Focus Area Two: Coordination

ICVA's global objective is to strengthen the collective ability of NGOs to actively engage in and influence coordination mechanisms to ensure that they are inclusive, contextualised and to provide effective assistance and protection to those affected by crisis.

ICVA Asia-Pacific aimed to continue to support NGO coordination by engaging at a high-level with IASC Coordination structures, while also strengthening NGO understanding and engagement with alternate coordination mechanisms, particularly those led by governments, regional organisations, private sector and NGOs themselves. And, directly support NGO fora in emergency preparedness and response planning where necessary, providing support in operational settings. Priorities included: Support NGO fora (prioritise active emergencies and key preparedness countries); IASC Emergency Preparedness Working Group – NGO engagement in simulations and follow key issues; and support NGO surge practices at regional level (localization). In 2019-2020 ICVA Asia-Pacific has:

IASC Humanitarian Coordination

ICVA's position in IASC structures at regional level (at the Regional Director's meeting), role as co-chair of regional coordination mechanism (the Emergency Preparedness Working Group), and recognition in the region by NGOs and networks as the channel for feedback and advocacy supported ICVA Asia-Pacific as they:

- **Represented NGOs and enabled NGO engagement and influence at the regional IASC mechanisms through continued connection to and engagement in regional IASC coordination structures.** ICVA Asia-Pacific co-chairs the Regional IASC Emergency Preparedness Working Group (EPWG) and convened thematic meetings with members and partners to share their experiences and concerns to link operational experience with policy and practice. For example, in April 2020, ICVA convened a meeting on 'Preparedness for Response in a COVID-19 Environment: Lessons from the Tropical Cyclone Harold,' to draw on the operational experience and learning to inform preparedness of agencies responding to the Category 5 Tropical Cyclone as the first scale up of an emergency response requiring international assistance since the COVID-19 outbreak. A similar event was held as part of the Q4 EPWG meeting group to review lessons from the real time response to floods and cyclones across the Philippines, Vietnam and Cambodia. ICVA's involvement in both events ensured NGOs were represented alongside UN agencies and others to share their response experiences to influence policy and practice.
- ICVA participated in the IASC Regional Director's meetings (June and December 2020) representing the NGO voice on issues such as Global HRP, upcoming trends in the region and enabling timely regional updates back to members.
- **Organised and convened an inter-networking event during UNOCHA's 2020 Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week (February 2020).** Titled "More Inclusive Coordination for the Global South NGOs," the event raised awareness and shared experiences at the global level with key stakeholders on the need of more inclusiveness in the coordination system.
- Co-hosted and convened Regional Humanitarian Partnership Events with APPRN and OCHA on 'making the decade count' (November and December 2020.) The event

consisted of a series of webinars led by APRRN, ICVA and UN members focused on a variety of issues affecting NGOs over the last decade including localization, preparedness, responding during the new normal and community accountability and involvement. Moving the platform online allowed for greater reach to national and sub national actors who may not have been able to attend the usual regional event in Bangkok.

- **Facilitated NGO engagement and collective NGO feedback to influence the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan and other COVID-19 response discussions and processes at regional level.** In 2020 ICVA Asia-Pacific raised consolidated NGO input in two COVID-19 response meetings with donors organised by OCHA and in the IASC's Regional Directors' Meetings.
- Collected, analysed and shared regional humanitarian policy and practice updates with members and NGO fora through regular consolidated Asia **member updates**.
- Overall bilateral coordination with UN agencies, such as WFP and IOM, has decreased linked to their shifting priorities and greater focus at government level.

NGO For a programme:

ICVA Asia-Pacific engaged with and **supported an increased number of country level NGO fora in Asia to take a strengthened role at country and sub-regional level and enabled connection, cross learning and replication between networks to improve and strengthen their work and outcomes**. This included through joint NGO fora workshops and bilateral needs-based support. For example:

- Direct bilateral support to strengthen the Rohingya Response NGO Platform in 2019. Having previously directly supported establishment of the NGO coordination body, ICVA continued to extend significant bilateral support to the fora resulting in a rapidly established functional NGO coordination body.
- Direct support to the ACBAR (Afghanistan mixed NGO Forum) strategic planning process through conducting a support mission to Kabul and Herat to engage members in the strategic planning process.
- Organised a series of Inter-regional NGO fora networking meetings on the COVID-19 response (March–December 2020). Three NGO fora virtual meeting were organised focusing on 1) advocacy to donors on funding flexibility; 2) exchanging experience on NGO fora roles during COVID-19 responses; and 3) information sharing on good practices, funding opportunities etc.
- Through the global NGO fora project supported by ICVA, three national fora from Asia - Myanmar (LRC), Pakistan (NHN) and Indonesia (HFI) - received small grants to strengthen in country coordination work including support for learning events around COVID-19 publication of IEC materials etc.

Regional networks, networks of networks and bodies

In 2019-2020 ICVA Asia-Pacific increased the number of connections and partnerships with NGO networks and continued to engage with the regional intergovernmental body with the goal of creating space for NGO engagement and increasing NGO influence.

- **Brokered NGO space for engagement in regional Intergovernmental bodies.** ICVA Asia-Pacific continued to invest in the partnership with the *Association of Southeast Asian Nations Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Center)*. While the relationship has challenges and many INGO members of ICVA have direct relations with ASEAN and the AHA Centre, national NGOs often invest directly with their national governmental bodies. Change has happened and ICVA has fostered a consistent dialogue that has kept NGOs informed and engaged. A key example of engagement includes how ICVA led the NGO review process for the AADMER 2015-2020 Work Program (on NGOs' role in AADMER implementation) (March – June 2020). A total

of five in-country NGO consultation meetings and one regional meeting were convened and a report was developed on the NGOs role in AADMER 2016-2020 and recommendations for the new AADMER 2021-2025. The report was submitted to both the ASEAN Secretariat and AHA center and was taken forward in the development of the new AADMER Work Program 2021-2025.

Fostered Partnership with and brokered NGO space for engagement in regional networks.

For example:

- Continued to invest in the partnership with the Asian Disaster Reduction and Response Network (ADRRN) - a vibrant and interesting space that brings together national actors at the regional level – as well as the well-established partnership with APRRN.
- Developed the interim strategy (2019-2020) of AADMER¹ Partnership Group (APG) including engaging in the APG board meeting for the interim strategy development (Dec 2019). This resulted in improved commitment and understanding of APG (the only ASEAN recognised network) on how NGOs in the ASEAN region can engage with APG and how APG can support national/local NGOs in ASEAN countries to continue engaging in the AADMER implementation and with ASEAN and AHA Center.
- Created informal spaces for sharing between national fora's through online exchanges, skype group and face to face meetings.
- In 2019 ICVA undertook a mission to the Pacific to strengthen the strategic relationship with the Pacific Islands Association of NGOs (PIANGO).

Moving forward, in 2021 ICVA Asia-Pacific will continue to engage with IASC and wider humanitarian coordination structures to facilitate NGO engagement and influence. Plans to establish a network of networks in Asia or to reach networks in the Pacific were not achieved. However, connections to key Asia based networks are solid and the informal regional space for sharing between NGO networks that has been created is considered to meet needs. As an equal partner to many regional networks, ICVA Asia-Pacific will continue to foster partnerships and to connect NGOs to regional networks rather than seek to extend capacity strengthening support to regional networks. Building on reflections from engagement and priorities in 2019 and 2020, in 2021 ICVA Asia-Pacific will support NGO network engagement with the ASEAN AHA Center rather than facilitate connection and engagement of individual NGOs.

Focus Area Three: Financing

ICVA's global objective is to ensure humanitarian financing meets the needs of populations affected by crises while ensuring adequate NGO access to principled, quality funding.

ICVA Asia-Pacific planned to continue to engage with NGOs, Donors and the UN on the implementation of the Grand Bargain at national and regional level and support the work of ICVA's Financing Policy Team to strengthen NGO understanding of humanitarian financing and its impact on NGOs in the region. Priority areas include: Harmonising reporting (Myanmar); Regional Dialogue on financing for Asian NGOs; Following new actors and trends in the region including those linked to the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

In 2019-2020 ICVA Asia-Pacific has:

- **Supported direct discussion with the regional level OCHA office on financing priorities in emergency situations.**

¹ AADMER: ASEAN AGREEMENT ON DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

- **Focused on gaps in financing such as alternative financing mechanisms such as Islamic Social Financing.**
- **Followed new actors and trends in the region and engaged in dialogue to link NGOs to key actors.** For examples, drawing on established relations with a director of an NGO Network who moved to the Asian Development Bank (ADB), ICVA organised a consultation meeting between ADB and NGOs on their new approach for working in conflict-affected countries in Asia and the Pacific region (September 2020). This resulted in improved understanding of NGOs in the region on ADB’s way of working and upcoming priorities, enhancing the potential for closer collaboration between ADB and NGOs in humanitarian sector.
- **Connected to regional donors including Korea, Japan, New Zealand and Australia.** For examples, in 2019 ICVA conducted a fora exchange with Donors and NGO fora to exchange ideas on approaches to humanitarian response and the regional funding landscape. Plans are underway to build on these discussions in the future and to bring in other emerging donors such as China and Indonesia.
- **Shared key updates with the region from ICVA’s Financing Policy Team** – including as co-chair with OCHA/CERF of the IASC WG on humanitarian financing – to support Asia members and fora in their understanding on global humanitarian financing issues, including but not limited to; donor conditions and requirements, risk sharing, risk management, Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPF), Pooled Fund Working Groups (PFWG), Grand Bargain commitment and progress.
- **Connected Asia experiences of engagement with the private sector.** As part of Impact 17’s global conference ICVA brought together members from India, China, Indonesia, and Japan to share their experiences of working together and building relationships with the private sector, highlighting the broad range of financing models in the region.

Overall, in 2019-2020 ICVA Asia-Pacific continued to invest in national and regional relationship building that resulted in key opportunities for NGO engagement and sought to enter into spaces where other actors were less present in terms of humanitarian financing, putting their investment in these areas. This approach will continue in to 2021.

Focus Area Four: Navigating Change

ICVA’s global objective is to ensure relevant support to NGOs in developing strategic thinking to navigate and influence changes in the response to affected population.

ICVA Asia-Pacific intended to support ICVA’s existing global priority areas of Shrinking Civil Society Space, Localization and the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus. The Asia Team will facilitate research and analysis to explain and highlight the trends, changes and updates in the regional humanitarian policy domain, initiating new work to focus on emerging changes that are impacting NGOs in the region and are not already well covered by other actors. Key priorities included: Localization and Nexus – helping NGOs where policy is meeting reality; Civil Society Space; and Support to Regional Networks – APG, South Asia Together for Humanitarian Imperative (SATHI), APRRN, Asia Pacific Alliance for Disaster Management (APDM), Pacific Islands Association of NGOs (PIANGO) etc (see Coordination section for network support).

In 2019-2020 ICVA Asia-Pacific:

Focused on localization, PSEA, the Nexus and Civil Society Space as key priorities, for example:

- **Built on the profile and reputation of ICVA Asia-Pacific as a focal point for localization** representing both national and international NGOs. Linked national NGOs to key networks and processes and focused on supporting national NGO networks and the engagement of

national NGOs in IASC humanitarian leadership structures and processes. For example, ICVA engaged at the ASEAN High-Level Symposium on Disaster Management 2020, which brought together key stakeholders and partners to develop a pool of ideas to the ACDM and other sectoral bodies concerned in developing a whole-of-society approach to managing natural disasters in the region. ICVA's Regional Representative participated in a panel discussion on Strengthening Community Resilience and Multi-stakeholder Partnerships and made 5 key recommendations for how to advance the localization agenda in ASEAN, including to support meaningful capacity strengthening and partnerships and improve accountability to local communities.

- As GBV is exacerbated in the COVID-19 pandemic, ICVA collaborated with the GBV AoR to deliver two webinars on GBV in Emergencies for Asia and Pacific. The webinars aimed to strengthen the linkages and exchange tools and promising practices between NGOs and CSOs, and to enhance the meaningful participation and engagement of NGOs/CSOs in the existing GBV Coordination mechanisms at national and sub-national levels in Asia and the Pacific.
- Shrinking Civil Society Space grew as a priority becoming a leading concern for NGOs in a wide range of countries. ICVA Asia-Pacific extended bilateral support at the country level – both to individual NGOs and NGO fora – to support dialogue on NGO space in Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- Linked to ICVA Asia-Pacific's unique understanding of Chinese humanitarian policy and relations with key Chinese humanitarian actors, **investment in engaging with China and Chinese Humanitarian NGOs was added as a key priority from mid 2019 onwards.** ICVA:
 - Co-organised a high-level event on Chinese NGOs in International Humanitarian Response with OCHA, and Chinese NGOs in Beijing, China (November 2019). The event was well attended by Chinese Ministries, UN agencies and Chinese NGOs and promoted experience sharing between Chinese and international NGOs and to improve the capacity of Chinese NGOs in the areas of international humanitarian response.
 - Developed and launched the policy Paper "[Positive Disruption? China's Humanitarian Aid](#)" in collaboration with the Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG) Australia and Innovation Center for Risk Governance, Beijing Normal University, China (December 2019). The paper aimed to support the NGO sector and beyond to have a better understanding on China as a key emerging humanitarian player and influenced the thinking of various actors on how to engage with China in the region.
 - Secured the first Chinese NGO member of ICVA (May 2020), fostering closer connection and relation with China's humanitarian actors and opening a two-way influence for advocacy on funding and policy in China and in the region.

In 2021 the team will continue with planned priorities while considering how to better frame the Civil Society Space priority within the region including how to build space for NGOs and NGO fora to exchange and learn on the priority and the partnerships to invest in to influence policy and practice on Civil Society Space.

The Way Forward

The ICVA Asia-Pacific hub is established as a key actor in the region, closely connected to NGOs, NGO fora and NGO networks, regional UN actors – including OCHA and UNHCR – and IASC humanitarian coordination structures. In addition ICVA Asia-Pacific has established connections to a range of regional donors including emerging powers in the region such as China and Indonesia and with the inter-governmental network ASEAN.

Linked to context in Asia, where there are less on-going or recurrent crisis, such as in the Africa and MENA regions, ICVA Asia-Pacific has had the opportunity to lead conversations and be innovative in approaches. For example, the focus on localization began in Asia, and the Asia-Pacific hub has been able to extend their focus to systems and structures outside of the IASC architecture as well as issues that are not UN centric or led. As OCHA and some UN agencies shifted focus to supporting Governments, ICVA has shifted to supporting NGO fora and engaging with regional networks and less traditional actors such as ASEAN as well as regional donors and powers including China.

The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated changes in the ways ICVA Asia-Pacific worked. With travel heavily restricted or impossible through most of 2020 and into 2021, time previously spent travelling, in workshops and engaging at individual country levels, was and will continue to be reassigned. Remote working has proved effective on many levels – including an enhanced regional dialogue and response on key issues and increased frequency of engagement with many stakeholders and partners – and there is an opportunity now to take stock and revisit priorities and ways of working both through the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

For example:

- How can ICVA Asia-Pacific continue to engage regional donors, including China, remotely?
- How can engagement, exchange and support to NGO fora and networks be effective in the longer-term through remote ways of working.

In 2021, ICVA Asia-Pacific will continue to deliver as planned while:

- Reviewing, as of yet, unmet plans to extend to the Pacific region.
- Considering how to place ICVA’s humanitarian focus within the central regional context of preparedness and development, possibly through new partnerships with Disaster Risk Reduction actors and Resident Coordinators – as well as the two Humanitarian Coordinators in the region.
- Focusing on NGO fora and networks and fostering partnerships with and connecting NGOs and NGO fora to regional NGO and inter-government (ASEAN) networks.
- Reviewing how to frame the Civil Society Space priority within the region. Including how to build space for NGOs and NGO fora to exchange and learn on this priority and the partnerships to invest in to influence policy and practice on Civil Society Space.
- Continue to map the dynamic humanitarian landscape and emerging actors in the region to ensure engagement with relevant stakeholders.
- Focusing a drive for new national and regional members on countries that ICVA is yet to reach and ensuring relevance in ways of working for these members.
- Monitor the impact of emerging trends such as climate change in the context of humanitarian processes and how to create a space for NGOs to influence adaptations in policy and practice.
- Considering if and how to monitor impact based on opportunities made for NGOs to engage and influence, as well as at outcome level in terms of policy and practice influenced.

In terms of resourcing to achieve this – undertaking both the day-to-day work engaging members and partners and the longer-term strategic work – the ICVA Asia-Pacific hub will require continued resourcing with both a Regional Representative and a Deputy Regional Representative.