



A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK  
FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE  
HUMANITARIAN ACTION

# ICVA MENA Regional Hub

Regional Direction and Achievements  
2019-2020

February 2021

## ICVA MENA 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. The MENA hub is managed by the MENA Regional and Deputy Regional Representatives based in Amman, Jordan, currently hosted by the ICMC regional office.

The MENA humanitarian context poses overwhelming challenges with multiple and complex emergency situations on an unprecedented scale. Protracted conflicts as well as natural disasters continue to result in displacement, damage and disruption to services and structures. There are about 70 million people in need of humanitarian assistance across the region<sup>1</sup> - this includes those in the globally declared acute and protracted level 3 emergencies in Yemen and Syria, the five countries hosting Syrian refugees (Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Lebanon and Egypt) as well as the ongoing conflicts/emergencies in Iraq, Yemen, Libya, and the State of Palestine. The needs of affected populations are increasing in scale and are aggravated by economic crises, chronic underdevelopment, natural disasters and diseases. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic is having a devastating impact on already-vulnerable populations and economies across the MENA region.

These challenges demonstrate the need for collective humanitarian coordination, advocacy, and discussion across a wide range of priorities. The ICVA MENA hub has established engagement with local, national and international NGOs, NGO fora, UN agencies and donors to support enhanced inclusive dialogue and coordination to meet the diverse challenges and needs across MENA. The direction and achievements in the region, 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.*

ICVA MENA aimed to support MENA members to: access to up-to-date information by bringing global discussion to the regional level, increase overall understanding on the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), Global Refugee Compacts (GCR) as well as regional priorities in the area of forced migration and facilitate local and international NGO engagement of NGO's in policy dialogue to influence policy and practice.

#### ICVA MENA has:

- **Connected members in the region to the GCR and key global policy discussions** by sharing key information and translating materials and communications into Arabic; enabling access to information; improved understanding and engagement in regional and global processes by local and national actors.
- **Supported the UNHCR Regional NGO consultations in Amman, Jordan in June 2019.** This included supporting the planning process and participating in and co-chairing panel

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/mena/humanitarian-response>

discussions. **ICVA meet with members to discuss primary concerns in the region, particularly on the topics of accountability to displaced populations and support to host communities, in line with the GCR.** ICVA also surveyed members and provided constructive feedback to the Regional UNHCR team to enhance future regional consultation outcomes for processes and outcomes.

- Facilitated diverse MENA **NGO engagement and contribution to the NGO Statement for UNHCR's 77<sup>th</sup> Standing Committee.** ICVA supported the development of an NGO statement representing issues relevant to the MENA operational context, January 2020.
- Increased collaboration with IOM through **co-facilitation of IOM's NGO consultations themed 'Access and Partnership'** focused on enhanced NGO partnerships and access in Syria, Libya and Yemen, October 2019.
- Worked with regional members to collate inputs, agree on key messages and to ensure local and international NGO voices are heard including in the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) and at regional IASC level.
- Built connections to the new decentralised regional UNHCR bureau, and secured opportunities for members to liaise and exchange with UNHCR at regional level.

In 2021 ICVA MENA will consider how to best position and use ICVAs added value for effective engagement with UNHCR at regional level and seek to map out clearer long term regional advocacy priorities in the area of forced migration.

## Focus Area Two: Coordination

*ICVAs 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 MENA** aimed to actively engage with national and international NGO Fora and members in MENA and support them with information on the IASC structure, relevance and ways of working and to build collaborative partnerships to strengthen NGO participation and influence at regional and global level.

### In 2019-2020 ICVA MENA has: NGO Fora programme

- Engaged with and **supported NGO fora across MENA on governance, strategy, advocacy and policy.** Including through joint NGO fora workshops as well as bilateral support - with a **specific focused on Syria, Yemen, OPT and Libya.** For example, in 2020, the MENA team held monthly meetings with the new Yemen National NGO fora director and steering committee members covering topics such as fora governance and advocacy and sharing of key tools and engaged with the Yemen INGO Fora to support the Advocacy and Policy Working Group to mainstream localization as one of the key strategic objectives and acted as a trust broker to facilitate collaboration between the National and International NGO fora.
- Invested in NGO fora connections to support exchange of information and inform engagement and positioning including at the regional and global IASC and donor level. Examples include the **Yemen Pledging conference, in June 2020 where ICVA coordinated with national and international NGOs and NGO Fora to develop and present a statement on their behalf.** ICVA MENA was the only actor to raise the voice and priorities of national NGOs, emphasising localization as a critical priority. In May 2020, ICVA MENA **convened a meeting with all MENA NGO fora representatives to exchange and engage on preparedness and response in the context of COVID-19.**

- Developed a strategic partnership with UNDP to **support development and capacity of 13 Syrian NGO networks in Syria and Turkey**. The engagement and capacity building programme is focused on strengthening the capacity of networks on coordination, advocacy, governance and strategic planning and in turn amplifies the NGO voice at regional and global levels, August 2020.
- Selected three national NGO fora – Yemen, Jordan and OPT for financial support under the ICVA global COVID-19 NGO fora support project. As a result of the support the national Jordanian fora assessed the local actor response to COVID-19, the OPT national NGO fora expanded advocacy and policy discussions through a series of policy papers and the Yemen national fora has developed their first strategy.

#### IASC Humanitarian Coordination

- **Developed relationships with OCHA and HC/RC's across MENA** to facilitate policy and advocacy engagement on behalf of NGOs. Held bilateral meetings with HC/RCs for Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and the regional Syria response. **In Jordan engagement supported advocacy efforts for the national NGO fora (JONAF) to have a seat at the Humanitarian Partners Forum (HPF)**. ICVA MENA is a member of the HPF localization task force established in November 2020 to enhance localization efforts and is contributing to development of a concrete workplan for the taskforce.
- **Collected NGO input** to inform discussions at the IASC EDG Meetings for Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Libya - Nov 2019, May, June August, November, December 2020.
- Active engagement on behalf of NGOs in the regional IASC meetings including the 3RP. Raising NGO priorities including the critical role of national NGO's.
- Collected, analysed and shared regional humanitarian policy and practice updates with members and NGO fora through bi-weekly **consolidated MENA member updates** (June 2020 onwards).
- Connected and coordinated with members and stakeholders on key topics through bilateral and member meetings. **In October 2019 ICVA held a member briefing in Istanbul** as a side-line to the IOM/NGO Consultation workshop. ICVA's Executive Director and MENA Regional Deputy Representative met with 10 ICVA members to hear their recommendations on their engagement with ICVA and exchange updates and priorities. In November 2020, **ICVA hosted a virtual meeting with member states and humanitarian actors to highlight the situational report of IDP Camp Closures in Iraq, identify the expected outcomes and present key recommendations**.

#### Engagement with regional bodies

- ICVA MENA worked to connect and build relationships with Arab actors, including the King Salman center, Kuwaiti local charitable organisations and the Arab League, which opened up opportunities for dialogue. ICVA held meetings with Kuwait local organisations in Amman and Kuwait to agree on possible support to a number of local actors that are active in supporting refugees in the MENA region, resulting in the capacity strengthening programme targeting selected local actors in Kuwait in 2021. Building on connections to the Yemen INGO Fora ICVA attended two events by the King Salman center.

Staffing gaps in 2019 and 2020 limited planned investment on engagement with regional bodies – this workstream will be reconsidered by ICVA MENA in 2021. Equally, COVID-19, as well as staffing gaps prevented planned cross-learning initiatives between NGO fora in the region.

## 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 MENA intended to work with the ICVA global Financing Unit to support MENA members and fora in their understanding on global humanitarian financing issues and to engage with key actors on Islamic financing and innovative financing in the region – with a focus on the Gulf – as well as build a focus on sustainable financing for local actors.

### In 2019-2020 ICVA MENA has:

- Shared key updates with the region from ICVA's Financing Policy Team – including as co-chair with OCHA/CERF of the IASC working group on humanitarian financing – to support MENA 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. **In August 2020 ICVA MENA hosted an interactive webinar covering key humanitarian financing priorities including funding flexibility related to COVID-19 and Grand Bargain commitments. 36 MENA members attended and engaged in dialogue.**

Overall, in 2019-2020 humanitarian financing was given a limited focus in the MENA region. Plans to map and engage with key actors on Islamic and Gulf financing and innovative financing in the region and to build a focus on sustainable financing for local actors did not go ahead and will be considered for prioritisation from 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 MENA intended to support NGO understanding of global issues with a focus on: localization; the humanitarian, development, peace nexus; civil society space; and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) through access to current information and tools and convening and connecting members and NGO fora on these topics to encourage debate and discussions from a regional and global perspective.

### In 2019-2020 ICVA has:

#### Localization:

- Focused on localization as a key priority, **building the profile and reputation of ICVA MENA as a focal point for localization** and representing both national and international NGOs.
- Engaged as a **key speaker at regional events focused on localization**. In February 2020 at the UN led HPF localization task force, ICVA presented the key elements from ICVA's localization paper and gave examples from different countries in the MENA region. In July 2020 ICVA MENA participated in a global webinar organised by the Urban Settlement Working Group (co-chaired by Impact Initiative, InterAction and CRS) to present the ICVA paper on localization and discuss progress and issues related to localization in the context of COVID-19. In October 2020 ICVA MENA participated as a panellist at an event marking the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the Syria crisis with a focus on the role of NGOs and advancing localization.
- Provided opportunities for discussion and debate on localization in the region and acted as a trust broker for enhanced collaboration and coordination between local and international

NGO fora at country level. In February 2020, ICVA **hosted a roundtable discussion on localization in Jordan with steering committee members from two local NGOs coalitions** – the Jordanian NGO Fora (JONAF) and the Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists/Local Humanitarian coalition (HEMAM) – **and the international NGO fora, JIF, to agree on mechanisms for collaboration and coordination.** The fora’s now coordinate on the localization working group and in June 2020 they had collective advocacy messaging for the Brussels conference on Syria.

- Prioritised local NGO fora in Yemen, Syria, Jordan and OPT for support, including financial and capacity building support and ensured representation of local NGOs in regional and global policy discussions.
- As co-chair of IASC Results Group 1 on localization, effectively advocated for local actor membership and engagement in the results group.
- Led qualitative and quantitative **research across the MENA region on national NGO engagement in IASC Humanitarian leadership structures** (September – December 2020). The research, to be released in January 2021, will define key recommendations to inform advocacy for enhanced meaningful engagement in national NGOs in humanitarian leadership structures at country level.

### PSEA

- Identified ICVA’s added value in MENA in the area of PSEA as the connection to local actors and national NGO fora. In January 2020, ICVA hosted a PSEA mission in collaboration with Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) and DFID, engaging key stakeholders on PSEA issues and priorities in Jordan. ICVA continued engagement with local actors, identified PSEA accountability and effective reporting mechanisms as the priority areas for support.

### Civil Society Space

- Supported NGO fora discussions and problem solving on key challenges to civil society space. In August and September 2020 NGO fora in OPT and Iraq were supported through bilateral engagement.

ICVA MENA has identified women led organisations as key actors in the humanitarian field in the MENA region – for example the Women Protection Network, the Syrian Women Humanitarian Network and the Sisterhood is a Global Institute in Jordan (SIGI) – engaged in the Syria response. In 2021 the regional team will further explore the role that these organisations’ play in the humanitarian system.

## The Way Forward

The regional hub has established relationships with a range of key external actors, as well as local and international MENA members and NGO fora and acts to connect members and NGO Fora to each other, ICVA’s global policy and advocacy work, and with UN and donor partners for collaboration, learning and amplified advocacy on joint priorities. Such as localization and NGO engagement in humanitarian coordination and policy at the regional level.

Gaps in staffing of the MENA Hub in 2019 and the first half of 2020, as well as changes in ways of working resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, slowed progress against a range of MENA targets. For example, engagement with Islamic and Gulf actors; engagement with regional bodies; and across learning events for members and NGO fora. However, at the same time,

COVID-19 brought new opportunities and new ways of working, enabling regular engagement through virtual meetings and events with established connections such as NGO fora and achieving enhanced participation in regional meetings as they transformed to virtual meetings requiring less time and resources for members and partners to engage. COVID-19 also freed up resources (that were previously assigned for travel and events) and generated new resources to support NGO fora financially and to lead research across the MENA region on localization in humanitarian leadership.

Full staffing of the regional hub with a Regional Representative and Deputy Representative since mid 2020 enabled review and reflection on planned targets and priorities. This process is ongoing, with a need to further identify and focus ways of working in 2021 to deliver planned impact.

**In the final year of the Regional Direction paper, ICVA MENA will aim to:**

- Develop concrete and long-term regional advocacy messaging on priority issues including Localization, PSEA and Forced Migration.
- Review, update and progress towards targets on Islamic and Gulf financing and local financing for national NGOs.
- Review, update and progress towards targets on engagement with regional bodies.

**While continuing to deliver as planned on:**

- Supporting MENA members and key fora with timely and relevant information to support policy and practice.
- Focusing on analysing and building understanding of regional dynamics.
- Playing a leading role in connecting MENA members and key fora to global and regional policy and practice across all focus areas and supporting MENA member access to regional and global actors.
- Extending regional learning and engagement opportunities for MENA members and key fora on ICVA focus areas such as localization, the nexus, humanitarian space etc.
- Focusing on contextualising humanitarian financing developments and information for the MENA region.
- Providing networking and connection opportunities for ICVA MENA members in the region.
- Supporting engagement of MENA members in global fora, sponsor participation of local actors where appropriate and possible.
- Increasing the focus on Yemen, Libya and the Whole of Syria Response – including both within Syria and refugee hosting countries.
- Connecting with non-traditional donors, including Islamic Financing opportunities and Gulf actors.
- Multiplying engagement, reach and positive impact by continuing to engage with and support existing local, national and international NGO fora, with additional targeted support to local NGO fora and networks.