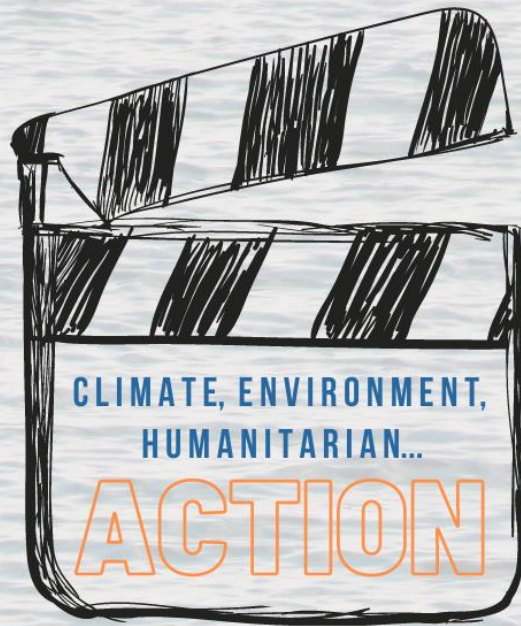




A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK
FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE
HUMANITARIAN ACTION



2021 ANNUAL CONFERENCE REPORT

CLIMATE, ENVIRONMENT AND
HUMANITARIAN ACTION

HOW CAN NGOs MITIGATE AND ADAPT?



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What did we discuss?

Introduction

ICVA's 2021 Annual Conference focused on the role that NGOs play in adapting the way we work to be better prepared to climate and environment change so that we leave no one behind. Especially in the humanitarian context when delivering programmes to support refugees, displaced and vulnerable populations.

The conference brought together ICVA members, NGOs, NGO fora, States, donors, UN agencies, experts and other climate and environment sector stakeholders to share their experiences, lessons learned, challenges and ways forward around these issues.

During ICVA's 2030 strategy consultations, members and partners highlighted the importance of the intersection between climate and environment and humanitarian action. For this reason, ICVA's 2021 conference aimed to:

- ◆ Increase awareness on the challenging contexts under which NGOs already are and will have to operate
- ◆ Enable members and partners to share and learn from each other
- ◆ Create opportunities for exchange and dialogue between ICVA members, NGOs and other actors in the humanitarian and climate/environment sectors on how to mitigate challenges, be prepared and support NGOs to deliver in the future
- ◆ Identify where more collective action and evidence is required, building on partners and membership strengths

ICVA's 18th General Assembly was held one week before the Annual Conference, and was a fitting introduction to the conference theme as the GA adopted the [ICVA 2030 Strategy](#), the [Strategic Priorities 2022-2024](#), the [Commitment and Motion to Action on the Climate and Environment](#) and signed on to the [Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organisations](#).



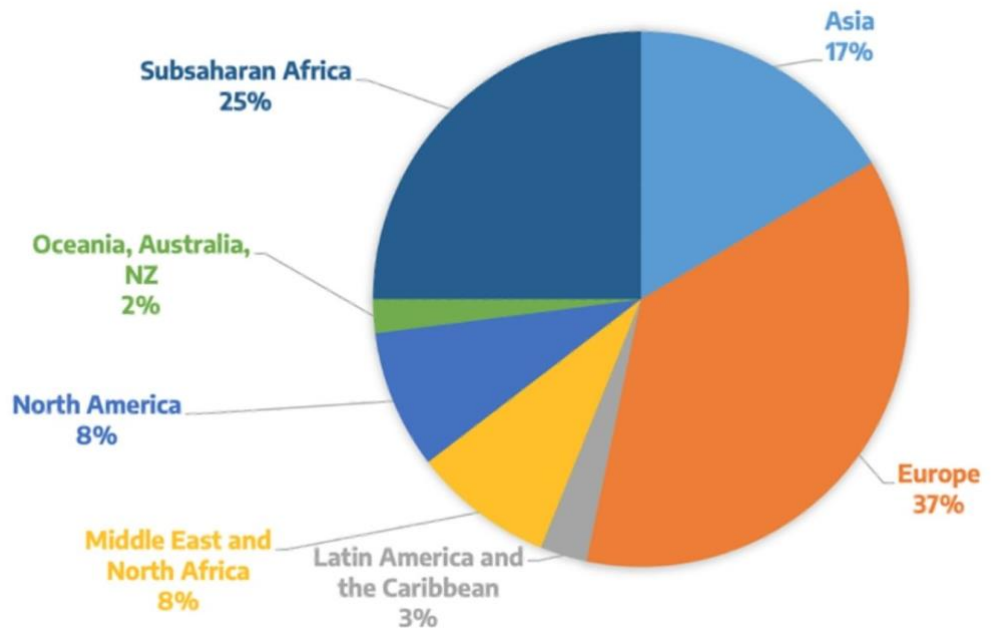
Who participated and how did they engage at the Annual Conference?

ICVA's second virtual annual conference saw the active and vibrant engagement of over 1,400 participants who either joined the event on the webinar platform or through video and audio-only livestreams.

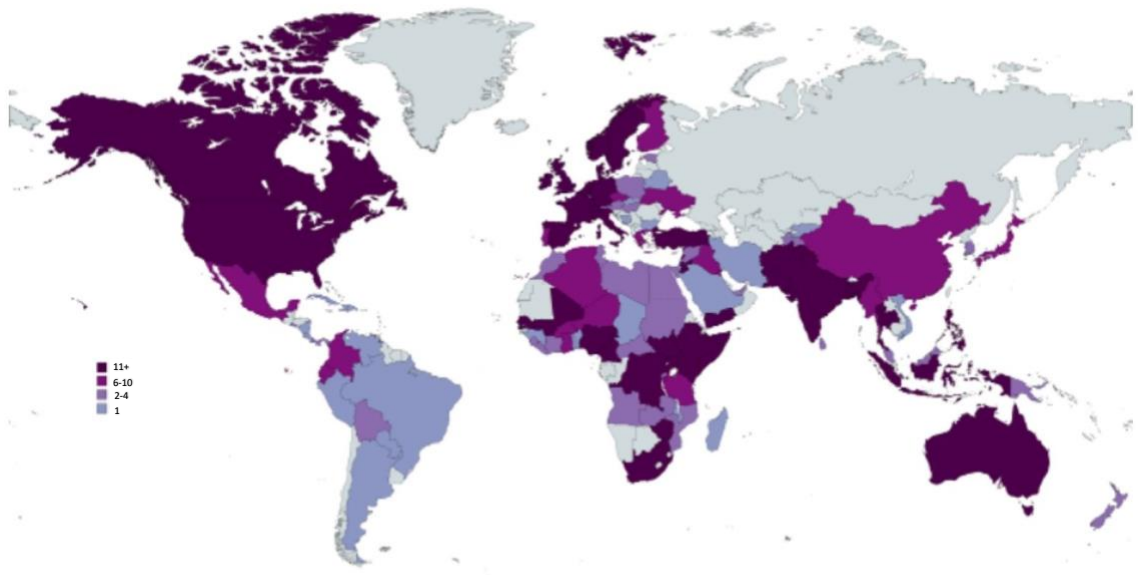
If you missed the live events, you can still view the recordings of all four sessions on ICVA's Annual Conference [webpage](#). You can also find [English, Spanish, French and Arabic captions](#) at the bottom of the recordings.

We had a coverage of participants joining the virtual conference from 119 countries based in 7 regions.

PARTICIPATION BY REGION

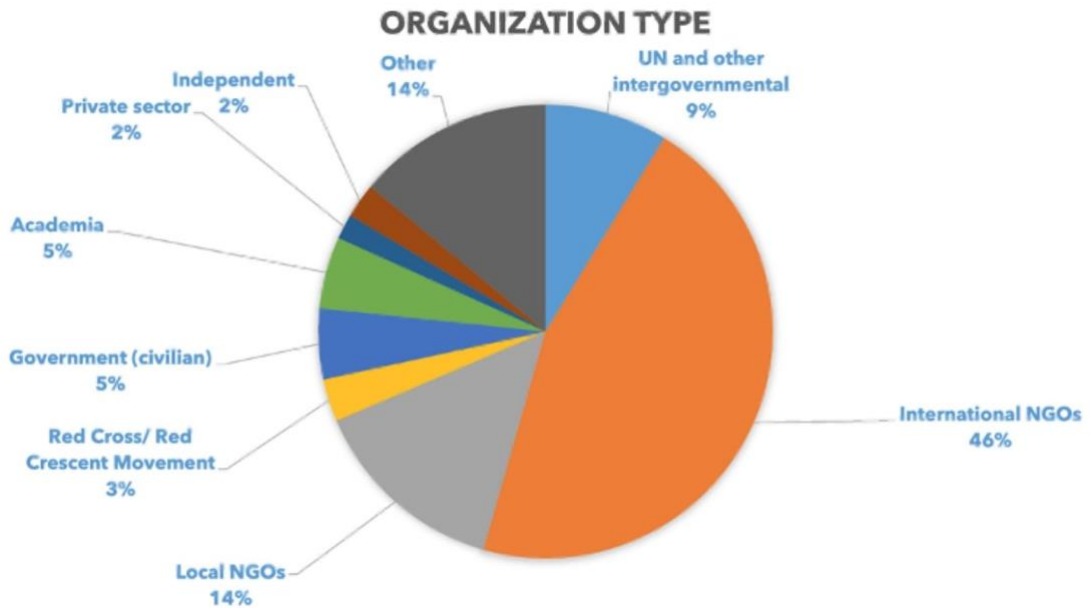


COUNTRY-LEVEL PARTICIPATION



Two-thirds of our participants (60%) were from International and Local/National NGOs, while the UN and other Inter-governmental organisations, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and other organisations working on the front lines and on

issues related to climate change consisted of almost 26% of the audience during the conference.



What did we hear from speakers and participants during the sessions?

Our speakers and participants framed the annual conference by recognising the severe implications that climate and environmental change has on vulnerable communities. Some of the major themes included:

◆ *Climate and displacement*

The climate crisis is one of the greatest challenges faced in our lifetime, not only due to its impact on the natural environment and ecosystem, but also due to the impact it has on populations being displaced and hindering the pursuit of durable solutions.

In 2020, disasters triggered three quarters of new displacement recorded worldwide accounting for over 40 million new displacements. More than the 95% of these displacements were the results of climate and weather-related hazards such as storms and floods with the majority of refugees and internally displaced people originating from and living in climate hot spots.

Each of the world's eight worst food crises in 2018 experienced the double impact of conflict and climate shocks which led to significant increases in the severity of acute food insecurity. Speakers also highlighted how slow-onset climate change impacts are further exacerbating conflict coupled with political and social inequality, where there is existing tension over natural resources.

◆ *Engaging affected communities, refugees, youth and women*

There was a clear call to engage youth, refugees, women and affected communities in policy and decision-making processes. With speakers from these constituencies calling on NGOs to act together and tap into local and indigenous knowledge and community groups to be a part of designing and implementing programmes instead of just delivering assistance to those affected.

◆ *Protection challenges*

Increasing problems of social cohesion due to breakdown of traditional agreements between pastoralists and agriculture-based communities in regions such as the Sahel has led to an acceleration of rural to urban migration creating tensions and more competition over resources and people requiring humanitarian assistance. Special emphasis was placed on finding solutions to increasing protection challenges faced by women and girls who often travel further and further to collect firewood, food, or water.



How can Humanitarian NGOs contribute?

Humanitarian NGOs were called to provide examples to reach the Security Council on increasing humanitarian needs due to the climate crisis. Humanitarian actors can contribute by sharing good practice, including adaptation at local level and examples of peace dividends of climate action that can be taken up very powerfully at the global level. It is important for humanitarian actors to also recognise the skills they have around risk modelling and anticipatory action that can be improved and scaled-up.

◆ *What should humanitarian actors focus on?*

Humanitarian actors need to improve their understanding of short- and longer-term impact of climate change on the most vulnerable population already displaced and in countries already in crisis or conflict. There is a need to scale up climate risk management and adaptation action to prepare for and respond to growing humanitarian consequences of climate change. A call to shift mind sets from a crisis management approach to a more risk management approach was emphasised during discussions.

◆ *Financing and localisation*

Humanitarian response of around \$30 billion is up against a problem that is going to cost trillions in the future. Speakers highlighted recommendations and mechanisms at global, regional and national levels that can be put in place to respond to these challenges:

- ◆ **Creating new and additional resources** moving away from the current practice of recycling Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding. The opportunity of mobilising additional resources is already available if fossil fuel subsidies that are promoting the sector that is causing the crisis is cut. Other proposals such as taxation on financial transactions could be an alternative option.

- ◆ **Predictable resourcing** needs to be put in place moving away from the current charity/donation-like approach. There was a clear call to developed countries to put in place systematic approaches in delivering their fair shares of financial resources, noting that the crisis that we are experiencing today has been caused by their actions.
- ◆ A structured approach to **mobilise the scale of resourcing required to respond and its deployment**. In terms of deployment, **resources need to reach those who are affected**. There was a clear agreement that more resources needed to reach local actors and communities who are best placed to deal with crises, know how to build resilience and how to adapt to this evolving crisis.
- ◆ The Least Developed Countries (LDCs) initiative for **Effective Adaptation and Resilience (LIFE-AR)** launched in January 2021. The LIFE-AR initiative encourages a decentralised approach where local actors have agency and decision-making power over how to plan, manage and use finances, specifically calling for at least 70% of climate finance flows to support local action by 2030. This initiative was highlighted during the conference and it was noted that Ireland was one of the first signatories. At present, only about 10% of donor international climate financing is actually reaching the local level.
- ◆ **Scaling-up initiatives** such as the [African Risk Capacity \(ARC\)](#) mandated by the African Union to help African nations proactively manage climate-related humanitarian risks through macro-insurance. The ARC Replica programme allows non-governmental organisations (like the Start Network) to work side-by-side with governments to manage risks.
- ◆ Call to **donors and funders to trust in local actors and local action** where a mind-set change from the norm that humanitarian actors are only accountable to donors to the importance and prime accountability to affected populations was emphasised during the discussions. Flexibility does not mean that organisations do not maintain due diligence and accountability, but it means let's be creative, use means and methodologies of getting money across to partners within legal frames as soon as possible when times are tough.

◆ *Risk informed decision making*

Forecast-based funding allows communities to be the first responders to the many small and medium disasters that do not hit the headlines and often go forgotten or neglected. Utilising science, forecasts, and risk analysis to understand the best time to generate funding and resources is crucial to activate several mechanisms for local actors to take steps to support communities and protect lives and livelihoods. Anticipatory action is also linked to early warnings that unfortunately do not reach the most at-risk communities in a timely and efficient manner. It is important that existing early warning messages promoted by national meteorological agencies are in the right language, format, or the accessibility so that communities can act and make timely decisions to save lives.

◆ *Climate change and conflict*

Today, out of the 20 countries considered the most vulnerable to climate change and the least ready to adapt, 12 countries (60%) are already in active armed conflict. In places damaged by decades of conflict and fragility, people's coping mechanisms are radically eroded by violence and makes them extremely vulnerable to any shocks, including those resulting from climate change. To respond adequately to people's needs and help

them be resilient, it is essential to factor in climate and environmental risks in a genuine way. Without this, responses will be ill-adapted and irrelevant.



Collective commitments and Action

There was a clear call to collectively ensure that steps are taken to help reduce people's vulnerability, even in highly challenging environments. Addressing the climate and environment crises is a top priority for ICVA as adopted in the ICVA 2030 strategy. To emphasise this the ICVA 18th General Assembly adopted a commitment and motion to action on climate and environment. ICVA members commit to do five things: to be guided by leadership and experience; to be part of the solution; reduce the impacts through our own action; to mobilise and advocate for others to narrow the gap and strengthen collaboration.

The European Commission has indicated that funding humanitarian aid and protection activities is a priority. At the same time, the European Green Deal is one of the top priorities for the European Commission, which not only concerns member states but will also focus on the greening of humanitarian aid with support on training and adequate financing.

◆ *Breaking silos*

According to ICRC, 65 to 70 million people live in areas controlled by nonstate armed groups. This gap has led organisations like the ICRC to engage in longer-term programming to strengthen resilience, notably through livelihood support and water and sanitation activities, but there are limits to the ability to compensate for the comprehensive development that provides solid avenues for climate adaptation. The importance of increased climate resilience while working across and building bridges among development, climate, risk reduction and peacebuilding sectors were stressed throughout the discussions. It is particularly critical to rebalance efforts and invest more in preventive and long-term resilience strengthening efforts than just dealing with the crisis alone.

◆ *Compounding crises and linkages to COP26*

2020 was a year of climate breakdown which identified 15 of the most destructive climate disasters of the year, costing between \$1.5 and \$5 million, but also with high financial losses. Floods, conflict and COVID19 have devastation and fuelled the food crisis with the destruction of crops, livelihoods, housing and dwellings, roads have become impassable, markets have stopped, supply chains have crippled, and food prices have absolutely soared. In advance of COP26, organisations will be advocating for increased financial support to the world's poorest countries and a push for their debts to be cancelled. The humanitarian sector was called upon to put loss and damage and the funding of loss and damage firmly on the agenda.

◆ *The Climate and Environment Charter and its commitments*

The charter is made of two important elements: on one hand the scaling-up of adaptation and recognising that strengthening coping mechanisms is not sufficient any longer. It is about incremental and informative work that needs to be done while recognising that everyone has a role to play, to not just do no harm, but to do good and reduce the impact of humanitarian programs and operations.

ICVA has signed up to the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organisations and ICVA members will consider signing the charter individually. ICVA will be looking also at collective ways with partners to support members to be able to live up to the commitments shared in the charter, including ahead of COP26. ICVA will be engaging on addressing impact of the climate change on humanitarian action, also through our focused areas of forced migration, humanitarian coordination and humanitarian financing, working in collaboration and drawing on the wealth of knowledge and experience of ICVA members and many of our partner networks.



Conclusion

Throughout the conference, we heard from speakers and participants on challenges, issues, opportunities, initiatives and ways forward to address the impact of climate change on humanitarian action and how to mitigate our impact on the environment. However, there is still much to be done. The changes required to improve the way we work at systemic, policy and organisational (operational and programmatic) levels cannot be achieved alone nor carried out in silos. There was a clear call to work in a collaborative and collective manner across humanitarian-development-climate-peacebuilding sectors and actors, leveraging on our comparative advantages.

ICVA will continue to share lessons learned, best practice and initiatives on climate-environment-humanitarian action in its Learning Stream starting in the Fall of 2021. ICVA will be putting its efforts to advocate, build partnerships, connect and collaborate on initiatives and continue to engage with members and partners to further understand and support NGOs on how to mitigate challenges and address climate, environment and humanitarian action.



Don't miss out!

If you liked what you read in the summary and you missed the discussion live, you can still watch the [recordings](#) with subtitles in English, French and Arabic! You can also check out [ICVA's Annual Conference webpage](#) to find the documents related to the conference. This includes the Speaker Bios, Key take-aways and Concept note.