



Annual Report 2000

**International Council of Voluntary Agencies
Conseil International des Agences Bénévoles
Consejo Internacional de Organizaciones Voluntarias**



The International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), founded in 1962, is a global network of human rights, humanitarian, and development NGOs, which focuses its information exchange and advocacy efforts primarily on humanitarian affairs and refugee issues.

ICVA's goal is to serve as a focal point for the growing global movement for voluntary action. Voluntary agencies – non-governmental organisations rooted in civil society – offer immense potential to motivate and involve individuals to mobilise resources and to reflect humanitarian perspectives in meeting human needs.

ICVA supports the autonomy and work of voluntary agencies in influencing national and international policies, protecting refugees and displaced peoples, providing relief and rehabilitation, fostering sustainable development, and in representing independent humanitarian views to peoples, governments, and intergovernmental organisations.

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ICVA's SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

www.icva.ch

A website with an interactive section for members providing discussion fora and unique information coming from policy meetings taking place at the Geneva level.

Talk Back

ICVA's newsletter concentrates on humanitarian and refugee issues and policy. *Talk Back* is available on ICVA's website or via e-mail: talkback@icva.ch with the message *subscribe talk-back*.

Foreword from the Chair of ICVA

The year 2000 consolidated the position of ICVA as a critical watchdog and advocate of basic humanitarian principles and human rights.

Thanks to the active involvement of ICVA's member organisations and colleagues in the NGO community, we were able to act as an influential spokesperson for the NGO community in the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the UNHCR Standing and Executive Committees, as well as in many other UN bodies.

The concerns of NGOs were raised on issues such as internally displaced persons, the security of humanitarian workers, the involvement of the military in humanitarian operations, accountability, and humanitarian standards.

A high profile campaign on the selection of a new UN High Commissioner for Refugees provided ICVA with increased visibility. A letter in the *International Herald Tribune*, calling for the new High Commissioner to be a dynamic leader and an outspoken defender of the Refugee Convention, was followed up with letters to potential candidates and a special edition of ICVA's newsletter, *Talk Back*, with their responses. A request for a meeting with the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, was accepted and we were able to share our views with the UNSG on what characteristics the new High Commissioner should embody and what qualifications were essential for the position.

Information sharing continues to be the priority of ICVA. *Talk Back* and the ICVA website continue to offer some of the best NGO insight on critical issues on the UN humanitarian agenda. We are proud to provide our members with a critical perspective on what is going on behind the headlines in a constructive and supportive manner, which presents a critical

Facilitating Access and NGO Input

As Global Focal Point for the NGO-UNHCR Partnership in Action (PARinAC) process, ICVA facilitates NGO input to UNHCR's Standing Committee and Executive Committee (EXCOM) and to other meetings convened by UNHCR.

view of what is really happening or is at stake. In doing so, we aim to provoke important debates and contribute to increased transparency and accountability amongst humanitarian actors.

Facilitating NGO access to the UN and other structures is vital to ICVA and our members. ICVA continues to be the focal point for NGO interventions and lobbying initiatives on humanitarian issues to many UN fora. Through consultations with members and NGO colleagues we manage to bring the views of an important part of the NGO community to the decision-making tables of the UN and other organisations.

2000 was the first “normal” year of the new ICVA after the crisis. I am pleased to say that we made it. Without the support of our members, colleagues from other NGOs and networks, UN partners, governments, my friends in the Executive Committee and, not least, the very hard-working and committed Secretariat (consisting of far too few people, compared to the workload), it would have been impossible to reach as many of our goals as we did.

THANKS

Anders Ladekarl
Chair of the ICVA Executive Committee

As one of the three NGO networks on the UN's Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), ICVA facilitates NGO input to the main international body for humanitarian coordination.

Facilitating NGO Collaboration

Upon the request of member agencies, ICVA facilitates the work of NGO collaboration initiatives that focus on information exchange, coordination, and advocacy.

Kosovo Evaluation Highlights Weaknesses in the

ICVA'S INFORMATION PROJECT

Talk Back

Five regular issues of *Talk Back* featured various articles on humanitarian and refugee situations in numerous countries. Articles on issues included topics such as the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, the Fribourg Forum, and staff security.

Special Issues of

Talk Back

Two special issues of *Talk Back* were produced during 2000. The first, issued in February, provided three commentaries on UNHCR's Independent Evaluation of the Kosovo Crisis.

A second special issue was released in September with responses from potential candidates for the position of UN High Commissioner for Refugees. Letters, written to potential candidates had asked for their opinions on refugee protection, the future of the agency, and the role of NGOs vis-à-vis UNHCR and its work.

The response to the Kosovo refugee crisis was unprecedented. Many governments and observers characterised the response to the crisis as a success. Yet, there were several aspects, which once scrutinised, showed significant failures on the part of the international community.

UNHCR commissioned an independent evaluation of its emergency preparedness and response, but given the extensive range of issues, ICVA felt that there was a need to examine several issues in greater detail than was done in the evaluation. During the crisis, ICVA had been well-placed to advocate vis-à-vis governments and UNHCR. On several occasions, ICVA produced reports on various high-level meetings held in Geneva during the crisis with summaries and critical analysis for members. A special issue of ICVA's newsletter, *Talk Back*, provided comments on three areas that ICVA felt begged for a more extensive examination, given their importance to, and implications for, the future of humanitarian aid and principles.

The special issue of *Talk Back* (2-1) was meant to provoke debate, consideration, and follow-up. The first commentary argued that the intensely bilateral environment that

Comments on Talk Back

"Just got through your latest issue [of *Talk Back*] – very impressive. I don't always agree with the positions you take, but I think that they are well presented, and help stimulate some debate – or at least get things out into the public domain."
Arafat Jamal, Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, UNHCR

"Your e-mail [*Talk Back* 2-5] on the succession process for Mrs Ogata was very welcome indeed. We agree that the selection process should be much more transparent with more emphasis on relevant experience."
Lionel Rosenblatt, Refugees International

"Thanks for your very useful articles – they are much appreciated."
Peter Scott-Bowden, Head ALITE [Augmented Logistics Intervention Team for Emergencies], WFP HQ – Rome, Italy

"Great to see such a professional publication."
Iain Guest, The Advocacy Project

"We really appreciate the newsletter being published and distributed among member NGOs. In fact, it is the source that gives access to better coordination and exchange of information worldwide. The staff here really enjoys getting the latest information regarding Bosnia, East Timor, and the activities of the world community and humanitarian agencies around."
Afghan NGOs' Coordination Bureau (ANCB)

International Response

characterised the international community's response served to weaken multilateralism. The second commentary examined responsibilities for refugee protection and noted that the evaluation missed the opportunity "to firmly link the behaviour of other actors to the position of UNHCR and its ability to deliver on its protection mandate." The entanglement of UNHCR with NATO provided the focus of the third commentary as it examined a merger that jeopardised humanitarian principles. The conclusion was that a clarification of policy was required on relations with the military: not only by UNHCR, but also by NGOs. Part of this discussion was later taken up during the pre-Executive Committee (EXCOM) consultations between UNHCR and NGOs in the autumn.

The hundreds of NGOs involved in the response signalled the need for self-critique and analysis within the NGO community. ICVA's comments were meant to complement and further such reflection: not only within the NGO community, but among the broader international community, given the plethora of actors involved in the crisis.

Evaluation of ICVA's Information Project

An evaluation of ICVA's information project was carried out at the beginning of the year. The broad range of answers provided the Secretariat with insight on how to improve the quality of *Talk Back* and the website.

Website: www.icva.ch

The ICVA website was used on a regular basis to provide both the public and members with relevant documents, with a restricted area for members containing a larger collection of documents.

The *Information Resources* page of the website, which was further improved, acts as a library of resources. The general areas that can be found on the *Information Resources* page are as follows:

- ◆ *Talk Back*
- ◆ Meeting Reports by ICVA
- ◆ UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee Documents
- ◆ ICVA Documents
- ◆ UNHCR-related Documents
- ◆ Links to Other Websites of Interest

The ICVA website provides discussion fora, which serve as virtual meeting rooms where members can discuss various issues and ideas in a secure setting.

The average number of hits on ICVA's website increased continually throughout the year. The peak was in September and October when ICVA published the replies of several potential candidates for the position of UN High Commissioner for Refugees in *Talk Back* 2-5.

NGOs Advocate for a Better Response to IDPs

ADVOCACY

Humanitarian Affairs

While its concrete impact at the field level is often questioned, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) remains the only international forum where UN humanitarian agencies meet with non-UN actors, including NGO networks, such as ICVA, to coordinate their policies and to discuss humanitarian affairs.

ICVA's contributions to the IASC meetings in 2000 sought to ensure that both international and national NGOs are fully consulted in UN humanitarian policy-making and co-ordination and that in these processes, humanitarian concerns are not submerged by other considerations.

Given that NGOs are often the organisations working in closest proximity to internally displaced persons (IDPs), significant advocacy from ICVA has been devoted to the plight of IDPs and the absence of an effective institutional responsibility within the UN system. In the autumn, ICVA, together with the Norwegian Refugee Council (an ICVA member working prominently on IDP issues), launched an initiative to start an NGO Reference Group on IDPs.

The debate over the question of who in the UN system should have the mandate for IDPs came to the forefront again following a session of the UN Security Council in January 2000. The US Ambassador to the UN, Richard Holbrooke, called for UNHCR's mandate to be expanded to include IDPs. The official UN view holds that the protection and assistance of IDPs requires a collaborative approach from UN agencies, which should be initiated by the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator and coordinated by the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). However, as Holbrooke said "co-heads means no-heads."

The subsequent debate in the IASC, in which ICVA participates, led to the creation of the Senior Inter-Agency Network to review the international response to IDPs in selected countries and to provide suggestions to ensure that the UN has a "coherent coordination structure" in place.

Rather than engaging in all IASC processes, ICVA chose to engage in selected debates to which it provided input. These included: inter-agency collaboration on staff security; the interface between human rights and humanitarian action; IDPs; and several country situations. ICVA also contributed to an NGO paper containing some views on the reform of UN peacekeeping operations as proposed by the Brahimi panel in the autumn of 2000.

ICVA has also repeatedly expressed concerns about the increase in the number of agencies and actors participating in the IASC, many of whom do not have operations in the humanitarian field.

But many NGOs hold views similar to those expressed by Ambassador Holbrooke: they feel that UN agencies can continue to hide behind each other and point at their colleagues in cases of protection and coordination failures. As ICVA pointed out in *Talk Back 2-6*, “the Senior Network is possibly the UN’s last chance to prove that it made the right decision for a collective responsibility instead of mandating a single agency with the responsibility for IDPs.”

Facilitated by ICVA, the NGO Reference Group, involving both international NGOs and NGOs based in developing countries, met mainly via electronic means in order to feed into the work of the Senior Network.

A Norwegian Refugee Council staff member represented NGOs on the first mission of the Network, which went to Ethiopia and Eritrea. Reports of the mission were shared with the Reference Group.

While it is hoped that the Network will be able to induce improvements within the UN bureaucracy, the Network’s success, ultimately, will be judged by its impact and concrete results on the lives of the internally displaced.

Protection

When compared with assistance, the protection of refugees, internally displaced persons, and civilians in armed conflict is rarely given the same level of priority in the international humanitarian response. In many of its messages, ICVA pointed to these shortcomings and urged UNHCR and other UN actors and agencies to step up their protection activities. Several UN actors continue to be jittery about incorporating rights into their assistance work.

ICVA, at the same time, also tried to promote the protection debate in the NGO community. Through participation in processes, such as the ICRC workshop on protection and the UNHCR-NGO Reach Out, and articles in *Talk Back*, ICVA emphasised that the promotion and protection of human rights should constitute an integral element of all humanitarian and development action.

NGO Participation in International Bodies and Fora

Preaching the mantra of involving civil society by high-level officials of international organisations has become quite fashionable. Yet, ICVA observed that within several of these bodies and fora, there is little understanding of how this involvement should be realised. Involving NGOs in a meaningful manner is one way to increase accountability.

In meetings of the rather opaque structure of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, ICVA called for better ways to be found of involving NGOs in the work of the Stability Pact by using existing networks.

Opening up the Process to Select a New High Co

NGO-UNHCR COOPERATION

PARinAC Review

The NGO-UNHCR Partnership in Action (PARinAC) process, which began in the early 1990s, underwent a review that was finalised in 2000. The review suggested ways of revitalising the PARinAC process and laid out a plan of action for 2000. The review can be found on ICVA's website.

PARinAC Meetings

ICVA co-chaired, with UNHCR, a combined PARinAC/Reach Out meeting in Tunisia with NGOs from North Africa, the Middle East, and the Gulf area. Regional focal points were elected for each region. Other PARinAC meetings, held in Central Asia (Turkmenistan) in March and in East Africa (Dar-es-Salaam) in December, were also co-chaired by ICVA and UNHCR.

Members and partners welcomed ICVA's efforts to open up the selection process of the new UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Since its revitalisation in 1998, ICVA has been an active advocate on refugee protection issues. ICVA's most significant refugee protection oriented advocacy came at the time of the selection of the next High Commissioner for Refugees in 2000 when it called for an opening up of the selection process.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's nomination of Ruud Lubbers for the position of High Commissioner came as a surprise to many. The selection process lacked transparency and openness on the necessary qualifications for the job, for which ICVA advocated during the summer.

Since the early nineties, NGOs have witnessed declining respect for the international regime of refugee protection and the mandate of UNHCR. In its newsletter, *Talk Back*, ICVA stated that "the most essential criterion in choosing the next HCR should be the person's unwavering commitment to the agency's core mandate of refugee protection."

ICVA advocated that NGOs should be considered as stakeholders in the selection process of a new High Commissioner. Compared to other UN agencies, UNHCR has the most extensive and involved relationship with NGOs, whether they are implementing partners or not.

www.icva.ch/parinac

One of the recommendations of the PARinAC review was to create a PARinAC website. ICVA launched an interactive PARinAC website during the pre-EXCOM consultations in September. The website allows interested NGOs, UNHCR staff, and even governments to have discussions on refugee-related matters on-line. Contact information for PARinAC focal points can also be found on the website.

PARinAC Visit to Guinea and Sierra Leone

Following a joint visit by OFADEC and the ICVA Secretariat to Guinea and Sierra Leone in November, an extensive article in *Talk Back* 2-7 called for the refugee camps to be moved further away from the

Commissioner for Refugees

An editorial in the *International Herald Tribune*, published on the opening day of the July session of the UNHCR Standing Committee, kicked off a campaign to open up the selection process. It was suggested that action be taken to involve NGOs in the process, as well as making the qualifications for the job public.

In August, ICVA wrote to eight of the candidates, whose names had been circulating in Geneva, asking them to elucidate why they were interested in the position and what they saw as priorities for the agency. Four replies were published in *Talk Back 2-5* in September.

In a meeting in early October, the UN Secretary-General expressed appreciation for the NGO interest in the process when he met representatives of ICVA, the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR), and the network of US-based NGOs, InterAction. Unfortunately, the Secretary-General's nomination of the new High Commissioner towards the end of October proved that, once again, the selection process for the head of a UN agency turned out to be opaque and secretive.

ICVA's efforts, however, attracted wide attention. Major newspapers, such as *Le Monde*, and news agencies, such as Associated Press, picked up on the initiative. ReliefWeb and OneWorld, important websites for the humanitarian and development communities, featured references to the issue of *Talk Back 2-5*. At the time, ICVA's website also received increased attention, with an average of 4,000 hits per day: four times the usual number of hits.

border. In addition, the PARinAC process was revitalised in the region with a new focal point for Sierra Leone being chosen from among NGOs.

Pre-EXCOM

The format of UNHCR's annual pre-EXCOM consultations with NGOs was changed to make some sessions more interactive. Two panel sessions were organised by ICVA and UNHCR: one discussed the status of UNHCR-NGO relations and the other session dealt with relationships between the military and humanitarian actors. EXCOM member States were also invited to the consultations.

NGO Input to Standing and EXCOM Meetings

Throughout the year, ICVA facilitated NGO input into UNHCR's Standing and Executive Committee meetings. Lead NGOs were identified for the thematic agenda items. PARinAC regional focal points were assisted in the development of their statements for regional agenda items. Input was sought more generally from NGOs for each of the sessions of the Standing and Executive Committees. NGO statements can be found on the Information Resources page of the ICVA website.

NGO ALLIANCES AND COOPERATION

Sphere Project

The Sphere Project, being rooted in widespread concerns over the performance and accountability of humanitarian actors, is probably the single most successful initiative in terms of collaboration within the humanitarian sector. In discussing the future of the project at its meeting in February, the management committee, in which ICVA participates, found that the arrangement has the potential to provide an added-value to the humanitarian system. One major shared concern among the

Improving Staff Security

The dangers of conducting humanitarian action, in what are becoming increasingly hostile environments, were sadly highlighted in 2000. In recognising their interdependence on security matters, UN agencies and NGOs agreed on the need to work more closely together. These issues began to be examined through a Task Force on Security of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group (IASC WG).

The issue of staff security is one that has seen a considerable amount of tension between the UN and NGOs. When it comes to the delivery of humanitarian assistance, there is generally a good deal of collaboration and coordination between the various humanitarian actors on the ground: both UN and non-UN. The same cannot be said for staff security issues. The UN Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD) in 1996 introduced a Memorandum of Understanding for NGOs that would bring them under the UN security umbrella, but would not provide them with the same level of physical protection as UN agencies. This top-down approach resulted in no NGO signing the MoU.

The Task Force on Security, chaired by the World Food Programme, included as members OCHA, UNHCR, UNICEF, and the three NGO consortia on the IASC: ICVA, InterAction, and the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response. Its goal was to “look at the cooperation between UN and NGOs on security matters,” and to eventually feed recommendations into the UN Administration Committee on Coordination. The IASC

collaborating networks and organisations is the declining respect for, and corruption of, humanitarian principles and values.

Two of ICVA's Southern-based members, Sarvodaya (Sri Lanka) and Africa Humanitarian Action (Ethiopia) have agreed to test the Sphere Handbook in their operations and to act as pilot agencies in the training and implementation phase of the project, which began in 2000.

WG warned that the Task Force should not look at the issue of staff security in isolation, but made the point that “it represents a component of the more general issue of the protection of civilians in armed conflict.”

The first meeting of the Task Force decided that the best way to move forward would be to initiate a consultative process with UN agencies and NGOs to discuss inter-agency collaboration on staff security. ICVA facilitated the secondment of a consultant to WFP, with whom ICVA worked closely. In December, the first consultation, hosted by ICVA and WFP in Geneva, brought together humanitarian workers from the field to discuss informal and practical ways for collaboration on security matters.

A second consultation in Washington, D.C. also fed into the recommendations of the consultant to the Task Force. The recommendations identify several means of informally collaborating on security matters.

Yet for the issue of staff security to be truly tackled, more needs to be done. There needs to be a change in the culture and approach of the UN Secretariat and Security Coordinator, which, so far, has only looked at security in a technical sense. However, above all, the larger political context out of which insecurity arises, must be addressed at the broader political level.

Humanitarian Ombudsman

Following the Rwanda multi-donor evaluation (1996), humanitarian NGOs discussed the recommendation to establish an Ombudsman office to review complaints about the performance of humanitarian organisations and the appropriateness of their aid. In July, ICVA's Executive Committee concluded that the Humanitarian Ombudsman Project is a worthy endeavour, which could enhance the accountability of humanitarian actors. In the autumn, the ICVA Secretariat provided some support to help the project established itself in Geneva under its new name: the Humanitarian Accountability Project.

Reach Out

Retaining the name of the initial process of UNHCR-NGO consultations in the field of refugees protection, a group of NGOs, including ICVA, developed a training project in the field of refugee law for humanitarian practitioners. Based on the belief that every humanitarian actor has a responsibility in protection, the Reach Out group felt that NGO staff need to know more about the legal context and basics of protection activities. ICVA has worked on ensuring a link between this project with the PARinAC process in order to make full use of existing networks and NGO resources.

Finances

Statement of Operations for the Period of 1 January 2000 to 31 December 2000 (with comparative figures as at 31 December 1999)

	<i>31.12.00</i>	<i>31.12.99</i>
	<i>CHF</i>	<i>CHF</i>
INCOME		
Membership fees	190,514	171,270
Humanitarian affairs grants		
Denmark	102,750	105,873
Netherlands	0	135,818
Norway	46,520	48,497
Sweden	0	50,612
Switzerland	153,806	0
Reserve liquidation	31,535	0
Miscellaneous	6,518	11,649
Exchange rate gain & bank interest	1,751	1,354
	<u>533,394</u>	<u>525,073</u>
EXPENDITURES		
Core salaries	239,944	148,618
Consultancy fees	7,300	19,966
Social charges	52,962	27,819
Provident fund	28,553	17,791
Other personnel charges	828	981
Website related charges	3,042	104,845
Executive Committee/General Assembly	19,878	31,351
Audit and legal fees	6,935	12,514
Office supplies/equipment/maintenance	34,920	22,366
Office rental and utilities	6,661	5,264
Postage and telecommunication costs	25,874	28,440
Travel and representation charges	17,420	14,731
Staff training	851	1,110
Debit interest	9,800	10,662
Publication and translation costs	8,479	526
Bank charges and miscellaneous	1,211	1,745
General Assembly reserve	10,000	0
PARinAC	43,289	0
	<u>517,947</u>	<u>448,729</u>
Year end result	<u><u>15,447</u></u>	<u><u>76,344</u></u>

The state government of Geneva provided a rent subsidy to ICVA for the year 2000, fully covering its office rental costs.

ICVA
Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2000
(with comparative figures as at 31 December 1999)

	<i>31.12.00</i>	<i>31.12.99</i>
	<i>CHF</i>	<i>CHF</i>
ASSETS		
Cash	765	745
Banks:		
– current	63,165	93,328
– World Aid 1998	1,863	1,940
– USD (\$13,925)	23,533	167,312
Debtors:		
– Impôt anticipé	0	153
– Accounts receivable	19,006	17,432
Prepayments	2,879	2,435
	<u>111,211</u>	<u>283,345</u>
LIABILITIES		
Creditors:		
– World Aid 98	0	1,940
– Unpaid bills	68,688	52,691
	<u>68,688</u>	<u>54,631</u>
– IM World Aid (member loan due 31.12.98)	179,500	179,500
– Flow through funds	0	179,267
Accruals & provisions	350	3,126
Restricted funds/reserves	36,343	89,359
Restricted fund/reserves adjustment	0	–33,421
World Aid 96	0	–73,381
World Aid 96 adjustment	0	73,381
Result for Period	15,447	76,344
General Fund carry over	–189,117	–265,461
	<u>111,211</u>	<u>283,345</u>

Support to ICVA comes from the following sources:

- ◆ 57 % institutional donors
- ◆ 36% ICVA membership fees
- ◆ 7% other sources

Full audit report available upon request:
secretariat@icva.ch

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- ◆ NNGOC – National NGO Council of Sri Lanka (2-4)

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- ◆ All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), *Kenya*
- ◆ Association Béninoise de Lutte Contre la Faim et la Misère du Peuple (ASCOFAM), *Benin*
- ◆ Christian Relief and Development Association (CRDA), *Ethiopia*
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- ◆ Asociación Regional para las Migraciones Forzadas (ARMIF), *El Salvador*
- ◆ Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR), *Canada*
- ◆ Centro de Estudios y Servicios Especializados Sobre Migraciones (CESEM), *Bolivia*
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- ◆ Consejo de Instituciones de Desarrollo (COINDE), *Guatemala*
- ◆ Federación de Organismos No Gubernamentales de Nicaragua (FONG), *Nicaragua*
- ◆ Fundación Augusto Cesar Sandino (FACS), *Nicaragua*
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- ◆ International Rescue Committee (IRC), *USA*
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- ◆ Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), *USA*
- ◆ World Vision International (WVI), *USA*

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- ◆ Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB), *Bangladesh*
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- ◆ Disaster Mitigation Institute (DMI), *India*
- ◆ Indian Institute of Youth and Development (IIYD), *India*

- ◆ Mission Armenia (MA), *Armenia*
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