



A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK
FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE
HUMANITARIAN ACTION

20 March 2018

Annual Conference Report

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

ICVA Annual Conference
20 March 2018

Navigating the Nexus:
NGO Perspectives

- Humanitarian
- Development
- Peace



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Executive Summary

As policy makers debate how to best approach the “triple nexus” – the inter-connection between humanitarian action, development, and peace- ICVA’s 2018 Annual Conference demonstrated the existing wealth of experience of ICVA members and key stakeholders in navigating the nexus. It was an opportunity to share lessons learned, best practice and processes, challenges and concerns faced by NGOs and humanitarian actors when working, in a principled manner, in the nexus. The conference reminded us that it is important to put people at the centre in planning and programming so as to truly understand the type of interventions required, be they from a humanitarian, development or peacebuilding approach.

The conference was an opportunity for actors working in the humanitarian sector to interact with development and peace actors and hear from double or triple-mandated agencies on their experience of working in various humanitarian contexts. It was evident that one size does not fit all and that different methodologies will need to be adapted according to the specific context and issues faced when delivering assistance. The participants had the opportunity to hear about policies related to the UN, the World Bank and the peace sector, how they are working towards a more collaborative approach when working in the nexus and how NGOs are best placed to share their expertise and knowledge with policy platforms. And last but not least we had feedback from those we strive to support – affected communities - on some of the root causes and continued conflict that require political solutions. This years' Annual Conference had 25 speakers sharing their perspectives with over 140 participants from over 36 countries attending the week's proceedings.

Session 1: From a People Centred Approach to Collective Outcomes

- Ms. Najeeba Wazefadost, Hazara Women in Australia, Deputy Chair of ANCORW and Deputy Chair of the Working Committee for Detention in APRRN
- Ms. Rolla Hinedi, Syria Relief
- Ms. Nasra Ismail, Somali NGO Consortium
- Dr. Win Tun Kyi, Karuna Myanmar Social Services (KMSS)

For those whose lives are at risk, there are no distinctions and silos between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding needs. Voices and concerns of affected communities and local and national NGOs need to be heard. The localisation agenda should not be just on paper, but it needs to be implemented at the operational level. Vulnerability and victimisation goes hand in hand, however people can be victorious when given a voice!

To begin the discussion, Najeeba Wazefadost shared her experience as an Afghan refugee and her understanding of the nexus. As a child, she realised the importance of cultivating peace within the family, believing peace to be achieved through cooperation and dialogue.

Her experiences emphasise the need for community developed solutions and for humanitarian, development and peace actors to increase communication and collaboration, making sustainability more tangible.



The importance of placing people at the centre: Rolla Hinedi noted that when designing and implementing programs, communities' needs are considered through a people-centred-approach, with access to populations and safety of populations and humanitarian staff alike, sighted as major concerns.

Most humanitarians involved in the **Syria** response are Syrians, either refugees working from neighbouring countries, or people who faced displacement often several times alongside the communities they serve. With such situations of displacement, professional capacity is lost and often not replaced, thus creating a vacuum in service provision. It is vital to empower local capacities to ensure we live-up to the humanitarian imperative of saving lives.

Ms. Nasra Ismail shared that in **Somalia**, there are efforts to **empower local communities**, especially women and youth. It is becoming evident that youth do not view localisation as only a concept. It is important to engage affected communities and create opportunities for people to lead. This can be done by including them in decision making bodies where they are drivers of the conversation. Localisation smells, walks and talks like country ownership.

In **Myanmar**, Dr. Win Tun Kyi pointed out that conversations often attempt to separate people into either humanitarian, development or peace silos, ignoring the uniqueness of people. The voices of the people need to be heard in conversations about collective efforts and outcomes. In working for healing, peacebuilding is critical following the trauma and suffering of conflict. People need support, not only on basic needs, but also on psycho-social needs.

The implementation of the nexus: In Somalia, there are opportunities for the nexus to be implemented. For example, the avoidance of famine in 2016 and 2017 was the result of early action, coordination between humanitarian and development actors and expansion of funds from development to humanitarian programmes. Somalia is very diverse and somewhat fragile, and in some regions there are opportunities for development assistance and resilience work to begin. However, the underfunding of peacebuilding activities must be addressed. Humanitarian actors, while responding to needs should be thinking about the future of the country.

In Syria, the major challenge is access to people, rather than funding. The lack of access puts the lives of people helping others at a higher risk. In areas of conflict, it is important to preserve humanitarian principles, the protection of aid workers and maintain accountability to affected populations.

In Myanmar, the work to address the trauma people have faced has revealed the importance of beginning work at the grassroots. Noting that humanitarian response often neglects the local context, KMSS works closely with local and international responders to build peace in communities while ensuring that life-saving needs are met.

Session 2: Understanding our Comparative Advantage

- Dr. Mamadou Dian Balde, UNHCR
- Mr. Angelo Barampama, CoP
- Ms. Daphrose Barampama, CoP
- Ms. Sarah Boukhary, WILPF
- Ms. Kate Half, SCHR
- Ambassador Aissata Kane, OIC
- Ms. Nargis Khan, PHF
- Ms. Leila Muriithia, RCK
- Mr. Atle Solberg, PDD
- Ms. Kali Taylor, SDG Lab
- Ms. Tiina Turunen, CBI
- Ms. Martina Zapf, Interpeace

While most of the time humanitarian, development and peace actors have worked in silos, it is important to understand who the development and peace actors are, what is the role they play in the nexus, what are their mandates in order to engage with them, what are the comparative advantages among humanitarian, development and peace actors and how can NGOs engage with other actors for better planning and programming?

A dynamic session two enabled participants to gather in small groups led by actors working in the humanitarian, development and peace sectors to share how they work in the nexus. In the light of understanding our comparative advantages, this session was facilitated by Initiatives of Change, Switzerland. Some reflections from participants are included below.

Community Centred Approaches: The nexus is obvious when looked at from the perspective of affected people, therefore the nexus should be driven from the bottom-up where civil society organisations have a key role. The voices of affected people should contribute to the definition of collective outcomes. This can be achieved by emphasis on dialogue and engagement of local actors in project development.



Collaboration between sectors: The conversation about the nexus should focus on similarities between sectors, breaking silos and capitalising on each others' capacities. The intervention of all stakeholders will lead to the success of the nexus. There is a need for common definitions, for example "resilience", a concept that has the potential to unite humanitarian, peace and development actors, still has different meanings throughout the sectors.

Challenges to the nexus:

- Sustainable solutions require political will, which is not always forthcoming.
- In the implementation of the nexus it is necessary to preserve and concretely protect the independence and principles of humanitarian action.

Session 3: **Contextualising Response: Case Studies on how NGOs work in the Nexus**

- Ms. Virginie Lefèvre, Amel Association International
- Mr. Driuni Jakani, Lacha Community and Economic Development (LCED)
- Mr. Neil Sison, Community and Family Services International (CFSI)

How do NGOs work together in a **multi-mission** or **multi-mandated context**? How can we break away from working in our little corner and **start working and planning with different actors**? Some NGOs are already working across humanitarian and development or humanitarian and peace programmes. How can NGOs make sure that there is **complementarity** and they work towards **collective outcomes** in such contexts, and at the same time **working in a principled manner**? Some actors are better placed in terms of resources, capacities and technical skills to take on support to communities. It is important to have evidence and sharing of best practices, challenges and what can be done better, including what obstacles are faced when working together.

The panelists shared experiences from their contexts. They discussed topics including:

Funding of NGOs: For example, in Lebanon, the differentiation between humanitarian and development action is seen as a donor-driven distinction. However, this difference determines the speed and consistency with which funds are distributed. NGOs sometimes struggle to understand the strategy and expectations of donors. Amel's approach to funding has revolved around advocating for the inclusion of communities in humanitarian response.

In working with OCHA's Pooled Funding, **South Sudan** has experienced difficulties because money allocated at the country level must adhere to global concepts that are not responsive and do not meet people's needs. The combination of the knowledge of national and local organisations with the resources of international organisations and donors allows for creative empowerment of communities. Therefore national NGOs must build capacity to properly compete for funds and communicate with donors to ensure their programs will actually address needs.

In the **Philippines**, Community and Family Services International has formed a partnership with the World Bank, receiving a Trust Fund until 2019. To build capacity, CFSI focused on empowering communities, engaging with local government and demonstrating a willingness and ability to adapt to the situation on the ground, build relationships and communicating. The World Bank provides support to CFSI in planning, management, implementation, financial management, while reviewing reports, records and documents.

This partnership has led to the creation of 527 sub-projects facilitated with communities and local government and benefited at least 620,000 people.



The implementation of the Nexus: In **Lebanon**, the barriers between development, humanitarian and peace are fluid, all sectors work together and it is important for protection principles to be respected in both contexts. The most important aspects are protection outcomes, is protection really ensured when delivering humanitarian and development programmes? There needs to be a clear global plan of action, not just sectoral specific plans. When stabilisation and other work is taking place, then protection is strengthened. There is a need to rely on strong protection actors who have local and national knowledge, information sharing, hold states and international community accountable and to preserve the protection of humanitarian principles.

Since the outbreak of war in 2013, the primary focus in **South Sudan** has shifted to emergency response. NGOs are filling the gap and providing services that the government does not. Due to the complex political situation, attempting to integrate peacebuilding into responses has proved challenging. However, engaging the refugee population may be an opportunity to begin the peacebuilding process. In the **Philippines**, CFSI has recognised the need to listen and build a shared vision with agreed goals while emphasising creative thinking and risk taking, especially in conflict settings. Still, it is important for organisations to maintain the ability to implement corrective measures.

Session 4:

Looking Forward: Reflections from the High-Level Panel

- Mr. Fabrizio Hochschild-Drummond, Executive Office of the United Nations Secretary-General
- Mr. Mahmoud Mohieldin, World Bank Group for the 2030 Development Agenda
- Ms. Ursula Müller, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
- Ms. Kelly Clements, United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)
- Mr. Scott Weber, Interpeace

The **Secretary General** is committed to putting people at the centre of the nexus. Collaboration must be context specific and balanced because needs differ from place to place. Political response to conflict must be incorporated to make responses effective because political intervention is often key to securing access. The purpose of this cooperation is "humanising political action", rather than "politicising humanitarian action".

OCHA is aware of the need to ensure approaches are context specific and actors must learn from one another. Humanitarian actors work to meet immediate needs of populations but the ultimate goal is to end the need. In many contexts, the cycle of need can be ended through collaborative efforts that strengthen peace. It is necessary to fund collective outcomes and use the resources of humanitarian and development actors for a higher impact. It is imperative to involve NGOs, the majority of humanitarian operations are being supported by NGOs', their connection to communities, analysis and programming will change the way OCHA works on the ground. The question continues to be how planning is translated into implementation.

The World Bank has seen sectors coming together in instances of conflict and natural disasters. In implementing the nexus, development actors can learn from humanitarian actors to respond more swiftly. It is evident that successful localisation requires more resources and coordination, the World Bank is attempting to address this. The bridging of gaps is the result of our actions, not our boards or trustees. The implementation of the nexus requires tailoring projects to their contexts. It is important to foster exchange between sectors, broaden the available tools and use them in an integrated way.



UNHCR's experience working with the refugees has shown that there is no solution to the refugee crisis without an accompanying development response. However, this approach is given momentum from the global spotlight on forced displacement to address this crisis. While the nexus does not require everything to be done together, things can be done differently. It is important to change responses to and preparation for crisis, as well as pay attention to who is involved in the discussion and the planning. The coming Global Compact on Refugees features a “whole of society” approach; it is not looking at displacement from simply a humanitarian perspective but incorporates NGOs, academia, the private sector, people at the centre and the World Bank.

Interpeace is urging the sharing of best processes rather than best practices across the nexus. How humanitarian actors engage in crises can foster or damage trust, therefore humanitarian actors must be conscious of the footprint they leave. Two thirds of conflict is protracted as a result, development, humanitarian and peace actors are likely operating simultaneously in these scenarios. Humanitarian actors do not need to be peacebuilders, they do however need to understand the political environment in which they operate. Trust must be cultivated not only among actors working in the different sectors but also between the state and its people. Resilience, which requires a foundation of trust, is the ultimate goal of the nexus. If all actors operate with this in mind, the nexus will be a success.

Yiombi Thona, the Chair of the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) shared his perspectives on the need to address root causes of conflict, the political and commercial interests in continued conflict in many regions and the importance of political solutions to end needs of people.

As follow-up to the Annual Conference and taking the lessons learned from the discussions throughout the week, ICVA is organising its third **Learning Stream on Demystifying the Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus** in partnership with PHAP. You can join the webinars live from 12 April 2018 onwards and view the recording of the videos afterwards on www.icvanetwork.org

Additional Meetings 20 to 23 March 2018

ICVA 17th General Assembly: On 20 March, over 70% of the over 100 ICVA members attended the General Assembly and an additional 10% joined for the on-line voting. 20% of the members nominated a candidate for the ICVA Board. ICVA is a vibrant network of humanitarian actors, who are contributing to policy influence, services and new solutions that enable the humanitarian sector to perform better.

ICVA's 2019-2021 Strategy adopted at the General Assembly is one ambitious step further in its contribution to enable and utilise opportunities to effectively build resilience and address the many societal challenges that continue to confront us. The models of engagement for civil society, business, government and international organisations are evolving. ICVA's focus for the Strategy 2019-2021 remains on "Forced Migration"; "Coordination" and "Financing" and further engages in "Navigating Change" while promoting humanitarian principles and the Principles of Partnership.

The ICVA General Assembly in its Commitment and Motion to Action on Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation and Sexual Harassment renewed its determination to better respond to obligations towards integrity in the sector.

NGO Fora lunch meeting: On 21 March, a lunch meeting was held with twenty representatives of NGO fora who attended the Annual Conference. The purpose of the discussion was to help inform ICVA's NGO Fora Support Programme, including highlighting specific issues faced when working as a collective, to share their main areas of concerns, and identify possible support that ICVA could provide. The Annual Conference week was a unique opportunity for fora coordinators or fora members to learn more about ICVA's role in supporting diverse NGOs and to meet with their peers from different contexts around the world and share their experience.

Good Humanitarian Donors Meeting on Localisation: The Australian Mission in Geneva and ICVA co-hosted a face-to-face meeting on 22 March between a diverse range of NGOs and the donors involved in the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) Initiative. A panel representing Support to Life, Save Somali Women and Children and CODE-NGO provided national NGO perspectives on donor practices. The ensuing discussion covered many of the Grand Bargain work streams, particularly those dedicated to supporting national and local actors, donor conditions and the humanitarian-development nexus. Gaps identified were related to Grand Bargain implementation, accountability, access and risk management. NGOs and donors agreed on the importance of replicating this type of donor-partner discussion at the country level. Participants proposed that an event be held in six months to demonstrate how the Grand Bargain could be implemented in full as a package in one chosen country. The Australian Mission also expressed interest in hosting a follow-up dialogue aligned to the 2019 ICVA Annual Conference.

Grand Bargain Focus Group Discussion with Overseas Development Institute: On 22 March, a diverse group of ICVA members participated in a face-to-face focus group discussion with Humanitarian Outcomes for the independent evaluation of the Grand Bargain's implementation. NGOs expressed their difficulty in keeping up with the Grand Bargain's myriad of work stream initiatives, and some do not have the resources required to travel to all the workshops and events.



Those who have signed the Bargain have noticed the significant time and effort required to comply with the package of commitments. National NGOs in particular observed that historical power dynamics continue to affect how host governments, donors, UN agencies, international NGOs, national NGOs and affected communities work together. Success of the Grand Bargain will require further progress in the areas of accountability, process design, work stream synergy, leadership and communication.

Discussion on "The Path Towards a Global Compact on Refugees": On 22 March, a diverse group of NGOs and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees senior leaders engaged in a face to face discussion on the process to-date. The conversation included an exchange on next steps leading up to the adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees.

Retreat on the Implications for NGOs of UN Reform: On 23 March, NGO representatives met in Geneva for a joint ICVA-SCHR retreat to examine the UN Secretary General's proposals for reforms in the peace, development and management architecture of the United Nations system. They will continue the conversation, looking at issues of humanitarian space, community-based action and the SDGs, the New Way of Working, financing/funding, and humanitarian leadership.



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