

Strategic Considerations: Membership and Member Engagement

ii. Membership and Member Engagement

Why is this important

ICVA is currently the most diverse global humanitarian network, with increasing reach towards regional and local level humanitarian actors. The current model has been successful in many ways and we are yet to fully draw on the individual and collective power of members to fully realise our potential. Acknowledging the current and future trends towards an increasingly complex and diverse humanitarian sector we need to if and how ICVA membership and member engagement will be fit for 2030.

What is the current situation?

While there are networks that can also call themselves global, ICVA is arguably unique to the degree that it combines large global INGOs with many local, smaller members; also in terms of how it works to ensure that all voices are heard and not just those of the largest.

ICVA has a track record of positive impact and value for members in Increasing NGO understanding of the humanitarian sector and its policies; Increasing NGO engagement in policy & advocacy in key issues; Influencing key debates/policies and connecting policies and practices through the strengthening of field-level NGO fora.

At present ICVA has three membership categories:

- Member – International NGOs, Consortia/Networks & national NGOs
- Observer Status – Interested organisations with legal or constitutional limitations related to becoming full members
- Affiliate Membership – Academic and research organisations

While it is expected that the ICVA secretariat provides a centre-point of ICVA's work, there are also expectations towards members in adhering to humanitarian principles, providing leadership, assisting in representations and reinforcing ICVA initiatives through their work.

Considering the increasing diversity of actors, including (for example) semi-governmental, private and social entrepreneurs should ICVA be now

considering changing or expanding its membership criteria or introducing other ways of engaging and if so, in what way? What would such a change mean for the rights and duties of new or existing membership categories.

Even if membership does not change, history tells us that we can do better in utilising the power and resources of members in order to reduce pressure to keep expanding the ICVA secretariat. Ambitions are growing and so we need to explore how we can resource those ambitions in a systematic and predictable way through responsible investment in the secretariat and creative use of member support.

ICVAs potential added value

ICVAs offer of membership adds value in creating a community of humanitarian actors. Members gain access to services, information, support, links to each other and having a role in leading or supporting the actions of ICVA. ICVA membership is one of the enablers that help organisations to be more than the sum of their parts.

It is clear that ICVA will continue as a membership organisation, the question is whether ICVAs value would be increased further by changing the nature of its membership, their rights and duties.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- a) Considering the increasing diversity of humanitarian actors, which of the following directions should ICVA take?
 - i. change the nature of its membership, changing criteria and potentially considering different types of members with different rights/duties... and if so how?
- or
- ii. keep the same membership and address the diversity of actors through the ways in which ICVA works and engages with others?
- c) What changes are needed in how member organisations work to increase the capacity of ICVA to deliver its ambitions, increasing co-ownership of ICVA and reducing pressure for growth of the secretariat?