

# **ICVA ANNUAL PLAN 2009**

## ICVA Mission Statement

Adopted by the 12th ICVA General Assembly, February 2003

### ICVA — An Advocacy Alliance for Humanitarian Action

*The International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) is a non-profit global association of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that works as a collective body, to promote, and advocate for, human rights and a humanitarian perspective in global debates and responses. The heart of the ICVA mission is to support NGOs to protect and assist people in need, to address the causes of their plight, and to act as a channel for translating patterns and trends into advocacy.*

*ICVA seeks to strengthen NGOs as part of civil society, through the relationships among member organisations from around the world. It facilitates the sharing and creative use of practical experience and strategies to promote and protect human rights, including those of refugees and displaced peoples, and to provide humanitarian assistance from the perspective of justice and sustainable development. ICVA fosters partnerships among agencies for the sharing and dissemination of information to attain consensus among member agencies on prioritised issues in order to effect change, particularly at the international level.*

*ICVA advocates vis-à-vis governments and international agencies for a strong NGO role in efforts to secure human rights, prevent conflicts, prepare for disasters, and improve humanitarian responses to distressed populations. Through its cooperative and catalytic nature, it gathers and exchanges information and raises awareness on the most vital matters of humanitarian concern before policy-making bodies.*

*ICVA has been in existence since 1962. It works to secure the commitment of the world community to address injustice, ensure dignity and rights, and promote international strategies that attend to human needs. Today's NGO members are strengthened in their missions to provide global assistance through the power and persuasion of the ICVA alliance. Tomorrow's members will continue to enrich the network with experience and opinion and will strengthen the impact of this alliance in bringing about a just world.*

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The 2009 Annual Plan is the first elaboration of ICVA's new three-year Strategic Plan adopted by the ICVA General Assembly in February 2009. This Annual Plan is organised around ICVA's five strategic goals: a focus on being more strategic and proactive in humanitarian policy and advocacy; supporting network to network collaboration; becoming more relevant at regional and country levels; contributing to improving humanitarian leadership and promoting change in the humanitarian community; and preparing for future humanitarian challenges.

The core of ICVA's work will retain a humanitarian policy and advocacy focus, in particular on protection, humanitarian space, humanitarian coordination, and reform issues. What is new, however, is that ICVA is planning to increase its relevance at the regional and country level. By undertaking more activities at the regional and country level with member agencies, such as providing support to NGO coordination at the country level, ICVA aims to narrow the gap between the international policy level and field-based realities. This way ICVA can help, for example, to ensure that humanitarian principles and standards underpin field practices and, conversely, that these practices inform policy setting. Much of this planned work has already proven to be of key relevance in the context of the forced closedown of the 16 NGOs in Sudan in March 2009. ICVA has played a coordinating role in terms of developing responses and strategies and has built a close relationship with the Khartoum-based Forum of International NGOs since the expulsions.

Support to (southern-based) NGOs and NGO networks is essential for ensuring that the humanitarian world is truly global, and essential to helping these NGOs to take on more prominent roles in humanitarian response and coordination. However, international humanitarian jargon and the issues of concern to national and local NGOs are worlds apart. ICVA will invest in the relations with these NGOs and NGO networks in order to ensure that NGO representatives from developing countries feel comfortable raising their voices at the international level, as well as in (international) coordination meetings in their countries. Change and leadership in the humanitarian community, which are two closely related issues, will also feature high on ICVA's agenda in 2009. Together with members, ICVA will develop an "Agenda for Change in the Humanitarian Sector" that will provide a roadmap for addressing a number of perennial issues in the humanitarian sector. ICVA will also support the participation of ICVA member agencies' representatives in Humanitarian Coordinators' pool selection and assessment process. Work on future humanitarian challenges together with the Humanitarian Futures Programme will see several outcomes in 2009. These products of this project will help member agencies to better understand the value of collaboration especially in relation to addressing future challenges that may exceed current capacities.

The Annual Plan provides further detail on this year's objectives and activities. The Secretariat has also developed an implementing timeline for (internal) management purposes, while oversight on implementation rests with the ICVA Executive Committee elected in February 2009.

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## I. A MORE PROACTIVE ROLE IN HUMANITARIAN POLICY AND ADVOCACY

The core of ICVA's work will remain a humanitarian policy and advocacy focus building on its long-standing experience in these areas. The 2009 ICVA General Assembly agreed that ICVA should, where possible, become more proactive and lead policy processes instead of following them. Such pro-activeness would, for example, see ICVA leading on an agenda item at an IASC Working Group meeting. It also implies that ICVA picks up the production of *Talk Back* as a publication that brings issues into the public domain and provokes further discussion among policy-makers and practitioners.

Regular contact between members and the Secretariat on the themes and issues that ICVA should focus on is essential. One way to enhance this contact will be through issue-specific working groups of members. In addition to the routine contacts in the course of daily activities, the ICVA Secretariat will convene an advocacy strategy meeting once a year, in the autumn to programme for the following year. In November 2008, this meeting determined that the topic of humanitarian space is of increased common concern among member organisations and is an area where ICVA, as a network, could add value in terms of strengthening the humanitarian identity of NGOs. The credibility of ICVA and member agencies working on this topic will be enhanced if NGOs take a good look at what they can do themselves in order to strengthen respect for humanitarian principles (see further under Chapter 3).

Another theme that will run through much of ICVA's policy and advocacy work is protection. In the context of the protection of those who have been forcibly displaced and UNHCR's role, ICVA will contribute to the preparation of a Conference being organised by York University in Toronto on Article 35 of the 1951 Refugee Convention, which stipulates UNHCR's supervisory role under the Convention, by developing and presenting a paper for a preparatory seminar. ICVA will also support a regional consultation on UNHCR's work, similar to the one that NGOs held in November 2008 in South-East Asia.

The protection theme will particularly feature in ICVA's work in 2009 in the context of ICVA's contribution to the ICRC-initiative to develop protection standards. In addition, the ICVA Coordinator will act as the focal point for protection, which is one of the cross-cutting themes in the revision of the Sphere Handbook.

In the context of the three year project to strengthen the role of NGOs in humanitarian reform processes that was started by a consortium of member agencies with ICVA's involvement in 2008, ICVA's main contribution will continue to be on the advocacy side. ICVA will identify appropriate venues and events for sharing the outcomes of the project's research and experiences with reformed financing and coordination mechanisms at the country level, as well as engaging other members in tracking progress made in improving humanitarian reform initiatives.

It goes without saying that as part of its ongoing daily work, ICVA will (continue to) participate in the various IASC<sup>1</sup>, GHP<sup>2</sup>, GHD<sup>3</sup>, and other processes and feed in NGO perspectives as

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<sup>1</sup> IASC: Inter-Agency Standing Committee, ICVA is a standing invitee and can bring two member agencies to Working Group meetings, which are held three times per year, and one member agency to the bi-annual Principals' meetings.

<sup>2</sup> GHP: Global Humanitarian Platform. In principle, this year will see that last meeting of this temporary forum that aims to strengthen partnerships for more effective humanitarian action between the three operational families of the humanitarian sector: UN and inter-governmental organisations; International Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement; and NGOs.

relevant. Some of the themes that feature on the 2009 agendas of these bodies include: needs assessments, humanitarian financing, humanitarian space, and leadership. These activities will be part of, and add to, ICVA's policy and advocacy work, which together form its agenda for 2009.

While the Secretariat will work on the basis of this annual agenda, the humanitarian sector is known for its quickly changing context and unpredictable character. The recent expulsion of 13 international NGOs from Sudan in early March, for example, saw a significant increase in ICVA's coordination work in terms of the policy and advocacy implications of this decision.

The ICVA Secretariat will also continue to use its place in Geneva as a platform for (informal) dialogue with various partners: donors, UN agencies, (member) NGOs, and others. For example, on the occasion of visits of senior UN humanitarian officials, ICVA will host informal lunches to discuss issues of mutual concern. Similarly, ICVA will hold a number of meetings with (donor) governments to discuss current humanitarian topics. Another type of event that ICVA has started on the occasion of the 2009 ICVA (annual) Conference and General Assembly is an informal (evening) debate in a Geneva-based casual setting.

In concrete terms, ICVA will:

- ◆ Organise the annual ICVA Conference on relevant humanitarian policy issues;
- ◆ Produce one issue of *Talk Back*;
- ◆ Propose, prepare, and introduce at least one agenda item for an IASC Working Group or Principals' meeting. Possibly, this item could include the outcome of the mapping study on NGO coordination models (see Chapter III);
- ◆ Hold an annual meeting with NGOs to identify advocacy themes;
- ◆ Focus its policy and advocacy on issues related to humanitarian principles, humanitarian space, and protection;
- ◆ Contribute to the preparation of a Conference being organised by York University in Toronto on Article 35 of the 1951 Refugee Convention;
- ◆ Identify relevant advocacy opportunities for sharing the experiences and views of the consortium of ICVA members working on NGO involvement in humanitarian reform;
- ◆ Participate in IASC, GHP, GHD, and other relevant policy processes;
- ◆ Maintain a capacity to respond in policy and advocacy terms to sudden developments that may have serious sector-wide implications; and
- ◆ Maintain a platform for dialogue and debate on humanitarian issues in Geneva.

## II. NETWORK TO NETWORK COLLABORATION

Together with ALNAP and People in Aid, ICVA has recognised the need for broadening and deepening the participation of NGOs from developing countries in humanitarian policy debates. Such increased involvement, however, is an interactive process: not only does it imply identifying representatives from southern NGOs, supporting their travel, and helping them to prepare for international meetings, but it also requires these NGO representatives to feed back their views and experiences of these meetings to their constituencies and audiences, as well as the networks' secretariats.

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<sup>3</sup> GHD: Good Humanitarian Donorship process, which is currently co-chaired by ECHO and the Netherlands. ICVA is in regular contact with these two donors, given the need for a strengthened engagement with the donor community on humanitarian financing and coordination issues.

The phase of identifying southern NGO representatives who are interested in participating in the international humanitarian policy domain and helping them to prepare is a critical one given the huge disconnect between their priorities and those of international policy-makers. International humanitarian jargon and the issues of concern to national and local NGOs are worlds apart and it will require a significant investment to build bridges and ensure that NGO representatives from developing countries feel comfortable raising their voices. Therefore, the ICVA Secretariat will spend more time through direct and continued contacts with its members from developing countries in finding relevant issues that see a convergence between their interests and the processes and discussions of these forums. One area in which there is likely to be such convergence is in the area of strengthening local capacities in ensuring better disaster preparedness and contingency planning, but any other humanitarian issue that would see an interest from the two sides is also conceivable.

In addition, ICVA will continue its close relations with other NGO networks, such as the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR), Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies (VOICE), and InterAction. ICVA will also try and create closer ties with field-based NGO networks to ensure sharing of experiences between the various networks and to encourage them to engage in more international policy debates.

In concrete terms, ICVA will:

- ◆ Work with ALNAP and People in Aid on a project that strengthens the collaboration with them and with networks in the developing world;
- ◆ Work on a more systematic process in order to improve collaboration with ICVA members in the developing world in identifying humanitarian themes and issues of their interest by sharing knowledge and information in a more targeted manner on IASC, GHP, GHD, etc.;
- ◆ Develop a systematic process for preparing member agencies' representatives from the developing world for their participation in international meetings, and ensure a follow-up process in terms of providing feedback and sharing experiences afterwards;
- ◆ Work with member agencies' representatives from the developing world to identify relevant networks and other NGO representatives who might be interested in participating in international humanitarian policy forums; and
- ◆ Work with other NGO networks to enhance sharing of experiences and to encourage greater engagement with international policy debates.

### **III. ICVA'S REGIONAL AND COUNTRY LEVEL ENGAGEMENT**

While ICVA's relevance and added value at the international (policy) level is well recognised, at the regional level or country level, much less is known about ICVA and what it has to offer. Hence, the need has been identified to develop ICVA's role at these levels as a strategic priority for the next three years. It is felt that ICVA can contribute to narrowing the huge gap between the international policy level and the realities on the ground by organising regional events, as well as through supporting NGO coordination in country situations.

With regards to supporting country level NGO coordination, ICVA is well-placed to make links and build bridges between these coordination mechanisms and the international level. It can also provide (financial) support where needed. Such support, for example, has been provided to NGO coordination in the response to Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar in 2008, where ICVA funded the deployment of an NGO liaison officer. At the time of writing of this plan, ICVA is in close contact with the INGO Forum in Sudan in view of the expulsion of 13 INGOs. ICVA has also convened a series of conference calls with expelled and non-expelled NGOs.

With regards to the regional level, ICVA is planning to organise at least two learning events on humanitarian principles, which will be hosted by ICVA member agencies. These learning events, for which funding has been obtained<sup>4</sup>, are part of ICVA's work on humanitarian space, but linkages will be sought with ODI's Humanitarian Policy Group, which is also planning to do work on the relevance of humanitarian principles, as well as with the IASC process on humanitarian space. The Islamic Relief-led Humanitarian Forum is also interested in supporting one additional (third) learning event.

With regards to ICVA's work on humanitarian principles and its engagement with faith-based NGOs, ICVA has also been asked to contribute to a seminar on humanitarianism with NGOs from different religious backgrounds, which will be held in October in the Gulf, and which is being organised by several academic institutions.

In terms of follow-up, participants of the learning events will be asked to share their experiences with their colleagues and other NGOs in their countries. The learning events, which will take place over one and a half days, will be followed by a one-day workshop on partnership, for which the *Principles of Partnership* (PoP) will be used as the guiding document, as well as related humanitarian reform issues in the context of the Global Humanitarian Platform process. Training materials for these workshops need to be compiled on the basis of existing materials and further developed.

On NGO coordination, ICVA will undertake a mapping exercise of NGO coordination mechanisms or similar collaborative efforts and networks with a view to understanding the various options that NGOs have at their disposal if they want to strengthen their relations and coordination. Separate funding from a donor will be sought for this mapping exercise. ICVA is also in close contact with InterAction as it is planning to develop protocols for NGO coordination. ICVA will also actively engage in the research and development of guidance for Humanitarian Country Teams.

In concrete terms, ICVA will increase its regional and country-level engagement through the following:

- ◆ Continue to provide support to country-based NGO coordination mechanisms and structures;
- ◆ Collaborate with other organisations and networks (e.g. ODI-HPG) on similar processes related to humanitarian principles and space;
- ◆ Organise two (or three) regional learning events on humanitarian principles and 'follow up' processes;
- ◆ These regional learning events will be followed by a one day meeting on partnership, coordination, and humanitarian reform; and
- ◆ ICVA will undertake a mapping study of different models for NGO coordination and maintain a link with InterAction to ensure involvement in their work on developing NGO coordination protocols. This study could be presented to the IASC as it may fit with the IASC work on Humanitarian Country Teams in which ICVA is also involved.

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<sup>4</sup> Several activities, which are outlined in this Annual Plan and that also form part of ICVA's three year strategy are being funded by a donor for 2009 and half of 2010 in a project that aims to strengthen NGO voices in humanitarian policy.



## **IV. CHANGE AND LEADERSHIP**

The 2009 ICVA Conference identified the themes of change and leadership in the sector as central to ICVA's work over the next three years. One of the suggestions made in follow-up of the Conference is to set a number of goals or develop an agenda for change on a set of specific perennial issues that the humanitarian sector continues to grapple with in terms of finding real and durable answers. These issues include, among others: the need for more principled approaches; more accountability, in particular towards disaster-affected populations; better leadership and coordination; strengthened partnerships; and a stronger, and lead, role for organisations based in affected countries. This "Agenda for Change in the Humanitarian Sector" would set the benchmark for ICVA's efforts to contribute to more effective humanitarian action over the next years.

One of the (related) perennial problems has been the issue of weak or poor leadership in the humanitarian sector, in particular at the country level. There is widespread dissatisfaction over the performance of many UN Humanitarian Coordinators (HC), who have little experience in coordinating operational response, including with agencies from outside the UN system. The process of strengthening the HC function, which has been identified as one of the priorities of the UN-led humanitarian reform process, has not (yet) yielded result in terms of better leadership on the ground. ICVA, however, will continue to promote further steps for improved humanitarian leadership and will remain an active member of the HC issues group. Concretely, ICVA is providing support to NGO candidates who will enter the new HC pool. NGO senior staff who will participate in the selection and assessment panels will also be supported in terms of covering their travel costs. In addition to the broadly recognised need for strengthened accountability of HCs, ICVA will also develop a web-based survey tool for its members to assess HC performance at the country level, as an (informal) independent accountability tool.

In concrete terms, ICVA will:

- ◆ Lead the development of an "Agenda for Change in the Humanitarian Sector";
- ◆ Remain an active member of the HC issues group;
- ◆ Support ICVA member agencies' representatives who will participate in HC pool selection and assessment process; and
- ◆ Develop a web-based tool to assess HC performance.

## **V. HUMANITARIAN FUTURES**

While humanitarian agencies have the tendency to be reactive because of the nature of their work, there is an increased recognition that humanitarian agencies need to prepare for the future as the number of disasters may increase under the influence of climate change, as well as the fact that they may become more complex. Given this increased complexity, collaboration among ICVA members, among humanitarian organisations at large, and between the humanitarian sector and other sectors, is no longer an option, but a necessity. The ICVA project with the Humanitarian Futures Programme (HFP) based at King's College, London, to look at the future of collaboration will produce several concrete tools for helping member agencies and others to better understand the benefits of collaboration. These tools, which will be produced in 2009, based on preparatory work in 2008, include: member agencies' reports of their views and experiences in collaborating with others<sup>5</sup>; a study that provides an overview of various forms of collaboration, and a definitional matrix on the concept of collaboration.

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<sup>5</sup> These reports will remain confidential.

The 2009 ICVA General Assembly decided that further efforts to strengthen collaboration with a view to ensuring improved capacities to address future challenges should be a priority for ICVA for the coming three years. These efforts, however, should be focussed on what capacities already exist at the regional or country level and should be undertaken in the context of disaster risk reduction and/or preparedness. The GA decided to develop a project in one region to strengthen collaboration and enhance capacities to address future humanitarian challenges. A pilot simulation exercise working on the basis of disaster scenario will be part of this project. This project will be developed in 2009 with a view to implementing it in 2010. Meanwhile, ICVA will support members' involvement in InterAction's workshops as part of its global effort to help agencies prepare for pandemics due to, for example, influenza.

In concrete terms, ICVA will:

- ◆ Produce several tools as the main outcome of its project on collaboration with HFP;
- ◆ Work with members and HFP in developing next steps at the regional level; and
- ◆ Support member agencies' participation in InterAction's Pandemic Preparedness Regional meetings.

## **VI. ICVA'S INTERNAL ORGANISATION**

In 2009, ICVA will continue to ensure effective functioning of the network. The new Executive Committee (EXCOM), elected by the General Assembly, will meet twice in the year and develop its way of working in terms of ensuring an active role in oversight and implementation of the Strategic Plan. It will set up sub-committees as it deems appropriate to ensure EXCOM involvement in all parts of ICVA's work. An important aspect of this role for EXCOM members is to represent ICVA at relevant meetings as part of ICVA's policy and advocacy work. The ICVA Secretariat will work with EXCOM members to support them in taking on such representation roles. The EXCOM's work for 2009 will include a further focus on quality and accountability aspects as part of ICVA's membership criteria, as well as the development of a by-law on membership suspension procedures and implications.

Through a process of regular feedback and an annual survey tool, members will be asked to provide their views and comments on ICVA's relevance and the quality of its work.

In terms of publications, the first half of 2009 will see the publication and distribution of ICVA's history, as well as the publication of the 2008 Annual Report.

It is expected that ICVA's (core) income and expenses will remain at a level similar to 2008. Revenue from membership contributions will be supplemented by donor government grants, which will either be made on multi-year or annual basis, or on a project basis.

The ICVA Secretariat will continue to carry out activities in support of this Annual Plan, as well as ICVA's Strategic Plan 2009-2011 on the basis of five full-time staff and will draw upon consultants for specific projects when necessary.

## **ICVA BUDGET 2009**

ICVA's 2009 budget is available for members at [www.icva.ch/doc00003540.html](http://www.icva.ch/doc00003540.html).

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