



A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK  
FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE  
HUMANITARIAN ACTION

## Join the Dots and Fill the Gaps

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At the forefront of the response in Ukraine, individuals, community-based organisations and local partners are overcoming enormous challenges to ensure people's basic needs are met. Local and national authorities, the United Nations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, international and local NGOs are providing essential services to civilians affected by the violence. In the face of enormous needs, NGOs are scaling up the humanitarian response in Ukraine and in neighboring countries.

The operational challenges are substantial.

Respecting our values as a globally distributed and locally rooted network with an outreach of 8,000 NGOs worldwide, the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) is building upon local capacities for humanitarian assistance and investing in the coordination architecture to prevent gaps or duplication in the Ukraine humanitarian response. Our members are working with refugees, internally displaced and host communities, and ensuring the response remains shaped by and accountable to crisis-affected populations.

Invited by Philea in March to join an online conversation on the respective and collective efforts in response to the Ukrainian crisis, I then shared six priorities:



1. **Support an adaptive approach to planning, funding and implementation.** The needs differ from one region to another in Ukraine and in the neighbouring countries. The circumstances evolve rapidly, and our intervention should be built with the flexibility to adapt to changes of the external environment and from feedback from affected populations. Real-time learning should be coupled with flexible rapid funding mechanisms.
2. **Anticipate that the situation will lead to a large-scale protracted displacement and refugee crisis.** We are confronted with the development of a long-running humanitarian crisis. As humanitarian actors, we must manage the prospects and perspectives for them to be conducive, realistic and honest.
3. **Collectively manage the narrative amongst humanitarian actors** and with donors and political actors around the realities and complexities of humanitarian access in these environments and what is required to facilitate this. We are facing a situation where the volume of funding available for the coming months is not the main barrier with the UN appeal and INGO appeals generally well-funded so far. But weeks into the response, we are confronted with a very insecure and complex operating environment, particularly in the East.
4. **Create an enabling environment for humanitarian responders** to engage in coordination mechanisms, to be inclusive and foster participation of local and national actors and prioritise accountability to affected populations. ICVA has reinforced its team in supporting NGO coordination to ensure as much as possible that humanitarian assistance is responsive to local inputs and expertise.
5. **Collectively support locally led humanitarian action as being essential for flexible and appropriate humanitarian response.** This involves changing funding modalities and the approach to risk sharing. We should be mindful that local organisations themselves change, emerge, perhaps some will disappear as the situation changes. International agencies need to find ways to support these efforts and be collaborative to minimise the risks of duplication and of competition in securing partners best able to deliver.
6. **Call for and extend the same leadership and solidarity shown in response to Ukraine across all humanitarian crises globally.** ICVA is concerned about the risk of diversion of attention and funding from other responses. This is combined with the implications of the Ukraine crisis on countries already experiencing humanitarian crises, countries, for instance, dependent on wheat imports disrupted by the crisis. Our food security experts are raising the alarm bells.

Ensuring that aid reaches all those in greatest need, without discrimination, that humanitarian needs are financed, and that adequate investments are made in preparedness and mitigation requires our collective leadership to join the dots and fill the gaps.