



ICVA at 60 Interview Transcript

Faizal Perdaus

August 2021

Hi

Welcome to our ICVA at 60 series.

A collection of interviews with leaders of ICVA in the build up to ICVA's 60 anniversary in 2022.

Join us as we listen to ICVA Board members and staff, former and present, talk about some of the challenges during their time at ICVA.

In this episode we listen to Robert White, a consultant for the ICVA at 60 project, talk to Faizal Perdaus, President of Mercy Malaysia.

Faizal was the Chair of ICVA from 2015-2018.

Their conversation begins with a discussion around the ICVA at 60 history paper, the final version can be found on the ICVA website.

Faizal goes on to talk about being the first ICVA chair from the global south, the challenges of localisation, and the importance of humanitarian sector to have a focus on the impacts of climate change.

Enjoy!

Robert White /RW

Faizal Perdaus /FP

FP: Hello. Hi, can you?

RW : Can you hear me OK?

FP: I think I can, I think I better switch off the video if you don't. Ok.

RW:Then then I'll switch mine off also.Yeah, thanks. Thanks very much for giving me a few minutes of your time. I really appreciate it. What were you doing? No worries.

FW: Like I said, today happens to be a public holiday here. So he's actually less busy than any other day. So, but yeah, no. I mean, there's no day that I'm actually absolutely free. So, yeah, so OK.

RW :Well, I'm so I'm sorry that you have to work on a holiday.

FP: Well, we've got COVID all over.

RW: Ok. Ok, good. Well. Why don't we just talk briefly at first about the paper that I wrote, if you had a chance to read through the paper and give me any of your observations? Is it OK? Does it make sense the decade by decade summary? What are your feelings about the paper itself?

FP: Um, I think decade by decade is fine. The only caution would be. This current story, how shall I say this, this current decade since maybe 2010. Simply because there have been so many structural changes in the system. And it's also the decade that I would probably know more of more about ICVA. But but there have been more structural changes in the system over the over the last eight, nine years. So until 2020, I guess. And those structural changes are continuing into this current decade. This one, if we take 2021 as a different decade. Then what we have is actually a lot more stories, a lot more dynamics in the last 10 years, nine years or so maybe then that would have been in the previous ones in the system. And so ICVA has also changed in the last decade from the 2009 / 2010 more than it has over the last two decades before.

FP: But I think apart from that, I think everything else is fine. So I don't know how you're going to. I'll just give you an example. There were three processes which took place in the last decade, one of which never happened before and has not happened since. But the impact has been continuous into this decade. Number one is the way the IASC and the U.N. system has engaged more with the civil society, regardless of whether that's NGOs or the Red Cross movement. So that's one. The second one is the World Humanitarian Summit and the impact of that and the realisation of many agendas out of the summit, not just one, but perhaps the most significant is probably the Grand Bargain. And and although I know people tend to look down on it, it's still a very significant time in point and the thing just continue until today and ICVA has brought up the new way of working the humanitarian development nexus, blah. So, yeah, so that's so that's the second.

FP: And so the third one is localization and it's been there before that. My own organization Mercy Malaysia first joining in the previous decade of 06. So we were the new kids on the block if you like. Localization actually really took off in the last decade and its ideas and its principles roared on a few waves. And again, the World Humanitarian Summit played a role in galvanizing those waves and making localization an agenda, which it is today in the sector. Now what that means for ICVA, all these, of course, happen over time. There were other things that happened in the previous decade as well. The that 06 decade in the 2000s decade. Most notably the cluster system. Yeah, as a result of in 05. But a lot of the rest happened in this decade, the UN reform process, although begun at the end of the last decade. Also went over into this the last decade or so. So, you know, sometime around 09, when Valerie Amos was being ERC sometime in 2010, and it went on into this decade.

FP: So. So I guess and with the humanitarian reform, with the cluster system occurring in 2005 to be exact, during the Pakistani earthquake and then the humanitarian reform process at the end of that decade, spilling over into the last decade. And then, you know, all those bringing together changes like how the RC and HC are chosen, etcetera, going into the momentum of humanitarian financing and the credibility of it. Now, ICVA, for example, before the last decade focused on only one major area of work, which is forced displacement and really focused on just that. And the only major UN partner ICVA had when Mercy Malaysia came on board in 2006 was the UNHCR. And that's it. They still are. UNHCR is still a major partner, but now they are one of a few. So, I guess, everything's fine with how you summarized it. It's just that ICVA also then took other roles in the last decade, which it had not taken before.

RW: Yeah, I see your point.

FP: Yeah. So so I guess in the last decade, so many changes in the system. Well, you could argue that, well, we are, but we're not talking about the system we're talking about ICVA. Correct. But ICVA changed because of that. And, for example, is no longer just an UNHCR centric humanitarian network, for example. And now having humanitarian financing is one of its core areas of work. And then going into NGO Fora and NGO coordination in the field, etc. And yeah, and then the difficult but sensitive but necessary discussion on localisation and politically because of the localization agenda ICVA had to maneuver. And I would say that when it was critical to do so, ICVA pivoted very well, actually. And that happened sometime in the middle of the last decade because realizing that it had membership from all across, not just from the global south, but also, of course, from the west, from the global north and then, you know, you have the east west divide here. It's not just north and south anymore, east west. Yeah. So ICVA has pivoted well there. Yeah, and has increased that pivot into this decade and over the last two years, we've seen ICVA engage China, Chinese NGOs, which it had never done before. Yeah. And for the longest time out of the 60 years or so ICVA has been talking about Latin America.

RW: Oh, yeah, right.

FP: Yeah, but it was only in the last decade, partly because a small part was because we just needed to expand our breadth and, you know, we realized that we were neglecting one large part of the world, which was which was the Spanish and Iberian speaking world over in South and Central America, especially and with a few countries in Africa thrown thrown in between Mozambique etc. And you know all that, but mainly because of localization, partly because of that small part, but partly because of localization. And so I guess, all I'm saying is the from 2010, if you take 2010 as the starting point or 2011, I don't know how you divide your decades, but it's OK. I guess the years where it ends in zero will always be the middle ones. So whether they whether they are at the start of the beginning of a over decade or so, from 2010 to 2020, they there were a lot of changes in the system which then affected ICVA, which changed ICVA and changed ICVA's role as well.

And which is why partly ICVA has successfully, I must say, navigated those challenges to position itself, because I think ICVA is now seen as the humanitarian, NGO network with the biggest, inverted commas, political clout within the system. Political, meaning it has a mandate, it has support, it actually can speak for a wide breadth of organizations. ICVA actually speaks to issues because it has a membership which is directly affected by those issues and not just, you know, not just speaking from up above 30000 feet. And also because it actually has a few focus areas where it actually goes to ground, for example, the NGO Fora and NGO Coordination focus area, which it is something which which ICVA had not done before in the last four to five decades prior to 2010. So I guess that's where I'm coming from, where I will say that everything is fine, but a lot changed in the last decade. And I guess if somehow I know it's going to be impossible to have it all in one in one page, but all or even two. But I guess if you keep that in mind. I guess that's my only comment. Over to you.

RW: Thanks very much. In fact, one observation and one question for you with the observation is that you mentioned three processes in the last ten years the IASC, the World Humanitarian Summit and the grand bargain. You could probably argue that a strong fourth process would have been the whole U.N. reform and how ICVA's negotiated and managed the response to the U.N. reform.

FP: Oh, yes, and as I said, its called humanitarian reform process. It was formally called that. And then if we are referring to the same thing, if we are referring to the one that occurred earlier, much earlier, which was the one that occurred in the decade before that at the end of the decade before that 08, 09, 2010. So when Valerie Amos became became the ERC taking over from what's his name now, the British guy. So then now, of course, now we have another round of UN reforms. A few years ago, in between Steven O'Brien and and Mark Lowcock being the ERC, with I think Antonio as the SG, having been in the IASC principles as High Commissioner

for Refugees, they are pushing the agenda as well. Yeah. Because I don't think the previous SGs not having the background from the humanitarian world could really understand what was needed. So Secretary-General Gutierrez, of course, knows very well. I mean, he was among the longest and also among the most, I would say, involved High Commissioner for Refugees.

RW: So I agree with you. The question I have for you based on what you've been saying is the concept of localisation. I know it's quite big now. Can you recall when the concept of the term localization was first used by your experience around what years or did it start.

FP: Okay. All right. That's a very good point and a very good question. Bob, as for in the field, it began really in earnest in Aceh because because of the magnitude of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster and the fact that initially there was a need for so much international aid because even a country as big as Indonesia with all its human resource, although of course it lacked at that time, at least the technical resources. But it did have huge human resources, but even Indonesia couldn't cope. But from that one end into three years later, down the road in full rehabilitation, recovery mode and reconstruction mode, having so much wastage, having so much, shall we say, disproportionate resources being put, and a lot of resentment as well from local actors, including the government and institutions like, you know, like the TNI, the Indonesian army. And that's when, you know, people in the global south started saying stuff and saying that, you know, we can do this just as well, you're not better. And there were organizations coming up both in Africa as well as in Asia. And I must say Mercy Malaysia, not because I'm president, but because it is true, Mercy Malaysia was one of them. There were many others showing that we could do the work as well. And it was then when the cluster system came into place in Pakistan just 10 months later, after the Indian Ocean tsunami, an earthquake on 26 December 04 when the October 04 Pakistan earthquake occurred and the cluster system was first tested.

FP: There were good and bad points, and the bad points then was that the local parties, whether they were NGOs etc whether they were local communities, were essentially left out of the cluster system. And except, you know, the armed forces in Pakistan, because they were they were practically running the country. So there was again a realization and resentment. And slowly but surely, a few strands developed both in the global south as well as in the north. In the south we have three strands. One was a very insular looking strand. Yeah, there were NGOs, civil society in Asia, especially Asia, not so much Africa who were looking to just, you know, work with their government and support their government if the government was not going to receive or accept any international aid. But of course, we saw in Typhoon Haiyan how a repressive, oppressive military junta could use that to its advantage. So, some of us realized that's not going to work as well, you know, and there were the other two strands. One was all for working with the system and trying to make it better and trying to make it more inclusive.

The other one was more of what I would call later when Ben Ramalingam, I don't know if you know him. When Ben Ramalingam was doing a study for Alnap and he interviewed me. The other one was a more Malcolm X approach, if you like. And some, some global south NGO's and this one was led more by those in Africa than the ones in Asia who felt that, you know, it was time for us to, you know, to say that we can do this and we don't need you. So that was, yeah, that was the start of it. But I must say, although, some of the leaders of that stand were from Africa, the majority of African NGOs were not for it because unlike the ones in Asia, the majority of African NGOs depended even more on on the UN system and on the global north funding, direct funding. Without that, they would be, you know, they would have to close shop. So that was the situation until Haiti. Then Haiti showed another face to international action, which which again was both, shall we say, a little bit overkill, especially from the US. However, it had underwhelming results because years later, Haiti would still be a failed state. And then again, the same issues which cropped up in Pakistan this time was even worse in Haiti. You when they called for a health cluster meeting there were a few hundred people trying to get through the door.

FP: So the system was just not able to cope. And again, the ones who would be left out would again be mostly the local NGOs. So after that, it gained momentum. After Haiti there was just no turning back. But the first strand among the global south NGOs kind of died out or became a very small minority and only in very, very authoritarian countries. But the two strands, the one that wanted to work within the system and make it better, more inclusive became a little bit more dominant. So people like ourselves, Mercy Malaysia, Africa for Humanitarian Action from Africa, Church World Service, from the subcontinent, et cetera. We work together in a way to bring the agenda of the global south forward and into the international platforms, if you like. Whilst there was another group which felt that, you know, all this is a waste of time, you know, because at the end of the day, it's still the white man who's going to control everything. They're not going to give us the money, blah blah. Oh yeah. So, you have this group of people, I guess so from Kenya, from Somalia, actually, but based in Kenya, actually leading that one.

FP: And there was a lot of courtship as well for two, so happening as well. So at this time that Ben was doing this study and and and people like the Degan Ali really was, for example, trying to actively recruit me into onto that side and etc. And while in the north, you had very conscientious, I must say NGOs like ActionAid and like Christian Aid, out of the UK especially. I don't know whether it has anything to do with the UK sense of fairness, you know, of cricket or anything like that who were very much for the global south and for localisation.

On the other hand, of course, the biggest NGOs, most of them took a very smart route and the route was they recognised strategically, possibly because they had good strategic people in their teams. They can afford them in their leaderships, so they recognize that, you know, it's a no win situation if they were going to fight this localization thing. Instead of fighting it they well circumvented it. And instead, went more and more into creating, you know, World Vision Indonesia and Oxfam India etc. And so giving more empowerment to the local branches, if you like. That's how they got into the localization game. And so now you have in Indonesia, for example, a few foundations headed by Indonesians, of course, but essentially still very much Save the Children, World Vision etc.

FP: And yet and so the big debate now in the localization debate. One of the big debates is whether these organizations are really local. And then you have the French and the French NGOs. And I must say, because I was vice chairman and chair of ICVA, I had the opportunity to interact. And as an IASC principal I had the opportunity to interact with French NGOs that not many other NGO leaders from outside the Francophone world probably had. So the French, as usual, are very much for, you know, liberty, equality, fraternity, and they were all they were all supportive of the local NGOs, localization, et cetera, except when it came to themselves. So they still wildly supported local NGOs, empowerment, etc. They didn't want to at all give an inch away, meaning that especially in Francophone countries in Africa, for example, they would still maintain as big a hole, as big a presence as they had before. And then the odd one out, of course, and the only one who can be the odd one out because they have the credibility and they have fortunately or unfortunately, depending on how you look at it, the track record to stay alone, which is MSF. Of course, MSF stuck to its principles that don't care much for, you know, the West giving only to Western NGOs, et cetera.

FP: However, you know, we're not going to support localization just because we want to make the locals feel good. As far as they are concerned what is imperative is the delivery of effective humanitarian aid, and so whoever it should be given the funding should be given the support. And of course, they argue they give it best half of the time, so they see no reason why they shouldn't continue to be where they are, you know, wherever they are. So and again, it's difficult to argue with them on that pretext because they do sometimes go where no others go. So, you know, I still remember during the Libyan conflict, you know, MSF was the only one in Misurata, you know, and on the boats as well as in the port, while people were being evacuated while the

bombs were falling. And during Ebola, of course, MSF were the only NGO initially who had the only NGO who had a field hospital apart from the militaries of the US, the UK and France. All the other NGOs did not. A pandemic and infectious disease pandemic was very scary. So even the other big INGOs did not actually participate in the full field hospital set up until much later in the epidemic. So, I guess MSF being who they were very daring to do what they did had the right to say what they said.

FP: So yeah, so they remained the odd one out, of course. And so I guess it gained momentum towards the summit. And when Ban Ki Moon and Stephen O'Brien announced that there was going to be a summit, the first time ever and still the first and only one yet, I guess it gave momentum to those who were fighting for localisation to be at the top of the agenda to do so. And Near the network, for example, was formally launched at the Summit in Istanbul. And so it was just five years ago now. So then after that, of course, at the summit, it had gained so much momentum that when the grand bargain - and I was still involved with the grand bargain process; I signed on behalf of ICVA the grand bargain and at the summit and after that because we were one of the leading proponents. So and out of the ten streams, 10 -11 streams initially was 10 then 11, I think. And then now it's back down to eight or something out of the first 10 streams. And until today there is a localisation stream. And and throughout the last five and a half years, that remains the stream that is most difficult to get any progress on because people are still, like I said, debating on who's local and who's not.

RW: Ok, thanks very much. You're giving me a lot of history and a lot of good information, which I really appreciate. Let me move to the three questions that that are on the list. Also, if you don't mind. Ok? Well, the first is I know you were Chair, you succeeded Penny Lawrence as chair, but you've been quite involved with ICVA for some time. When you were chair and when you were more active with ICVA and the board, what made you proud or proudest of being associated with ICVA at that time?

FP: Right, I must say that when I first came on to the board in and I first came on to the board in in 08, replacing my predecessor in 09, my predecessor, Jamila Muhammad, who later went on to other things, of course, because she left Mercy Malaysia and so her seat was vacant. So when I came on board, I guess it struck me that, you know, that there was actually real and genuine interest in both the secretariat, people like Ed and Manisha Thomas, etc. (there were many others). There was actually genuine interest in the secretariat as well as on the board, of course. At that time Paul O'Brien had taken over as chair and there was actually genuine interest and there were members of the board as well, like Marianne, from the Act alliance, who, although they were from the global north, were very, very interested to see global south members and global south leaders from the global south NGO's really, you know, improve not just the area, the organisations, but also the outstanding in their positioning within and also outside. So there was actually a genuineness to that. I guess that kind of made the decision for us as an organization Mercy Malaysia and for myself as an individual, to stay on and to continue to engage in ICVA.

FP: Because while Jamila had been on the board and she left on her second term, she I mean, she was she was on in the first term and then second term she was re-elected to the board. Then I took over. But we could have ended it there because she didn't run for chair, but she didn't make it and we could have ended it there. But no, because there was actually genuine interest and genuine help and assistance as well. And we made no secret, of course, of the fact that some of us like myself, like Miskir from AHA., et cetera, like Mamadou from OFADEC in Senegal. While we had the local contacts and while we had some strings of our own, we still lacked many, many things in terms of both knowledge and experience as far as the international humanitarian system was concerned. But but we got help and we were actually not just helped assiste, showed the way, but also actually had doors opened for us. Yeah, for us to be even more active. And so I guess, the decision making was, except for, you know, when it was necessary, that only the chair, you know, had to make an emergency decision. But apart from those very few occasions, it was very much a democratic and participative decision making process within the board.

FP: So we were not just there as tokens, if you like, from the global south. Membership of both ICVA on the general level, as well as of the board, was not just tokenism. So, so that was good. So I guess that's why we stayed. And when Penny came on board, I still remember Penny Lawrence succeeding, wanting to succeed Paul O'Brien from Concern. She actually gave me a call and said, you know, as far as she was personally concerned, it was time for a global south NGO to have a leader who would lead ICVA. But she said, but I actually told her, No, it's not time yet. And I think we need a few, maybe two more years. And because I said I didn't want when the time came that the chair was from the global south again because he or she was from the global south. It must be because he or she is the best person to lead the network. And if we had the position ICVA well by them to lead the international humanitarian NGO community, that leadership has to be accepted as the best option for ICVA. Not because he or she is from, you know, from a country in the South.

FP: So and we actually knew by then that there was going to be some major changes in the system happening. Plus the summit was probably going to happen in a few years time. There was already whispers about it and it would be a good time for for a medium NGO, Oxfam to actually lead. But at the same time, perhaps open the doors for some of us and see if any of us could take up the baton if you like. So there was, yeah, that was how it was. That was what actually happened. And worked together during that term and there were changes in leadership at the secretariat level as well. Ed and Manisha, after I think of almost a decade or even more than a decade, took their leave and went on to other things and a new team was on board at the secretariat. And I guess that both the changes at the top, at the board and secretariat levels was the impetus that was needed. And with the board as well as the board vision as well as deep knowledge of the system now. And I must say that a few of us, myself, Misikir, Mamadou, Steven Muncy, Ithough he's American, he's actually been more of a Filipino than an American over the last 30 years.

FP: You know him? Yeah, he's based in. He's based in Manila. So a few of us had stayed for like two or three terms. By that time, and so we had not just got a good synergy between us, but all of us had deeper knowledge, if you like, of the system and of our strength and how we could bring it together. And and there were additions, people like Roger Yates came on board. Brilliant brains, you know, brilliant mind the professor, if you like, he knows everything about the system and then in all the historical facts and figures, and it was just the right blend. So we had a very, very strong board coming together then during Penny Lawrence's term that prepared us just nicely for 2015. And I had been vice chair for three years to Penny, and I must say, like I said the the genuine interest in seeing us from the global south progress, but not just for ourselves but for the good of the international community was there. Taken off from where Ed and Paul had had left, and then Nan and Penny did the same. There were IASC principals meetings which sometimes were called and and he and Paul felt that, you know, I would be the best person to go instead of Paul.

FP: They would just call me. Can you go and you go and same thing happened during Penny's time, Penny made it a kind of notwithstanding rule, that we understood between myself, Penny and Nan, that was while she's the chair. She would be looking for opportunities to not only bring me along to some of the principals meeting, but also on occasion when the situation was permissible to actually let me lead and that she would actually not go. She would actually not go and she would ask me to take her place. And so that happened even within her term, so that that prepared me very well for the for the three years that I was the chair. And lo and behold, of course, the. Humanitarian Summit and all the changes we spoke about, the reform process had come to a full circle, the localization agenda come to the forefront. Humanitarian financing had been laid bare both its good and bad sides. And so we were there and we were ready and I guess we took it from there. And like I said, financing, NGO Fora coordination, etc.all became focus areas of ICVA's work.And and this is where I guess we took it on and politically as well.

FP: I must say we did very well in standing up and saying that, you know, ICVA, as a network represents all of us, not just those from the global north, the West, but also from the global south. We were seriously looking even then at Latin America and East Asia, of course, although they have a different kind of tradition of civil society. But, you know, it was time to engage. And of course, not everything could be done during the three years that I was chair. And some of it like the engagement with Latin America and with China, etc., gained more strength in the board during the tenure after I left. And by now, of course, it's reality already. So, I think I'm very proud of the fact that ICVA has managed to stay relevant. There was a moment in the early 2010, 11, 12 or so when that was when that question came into being. Were we just co-ordinator for the annual UNHCR NGO meetings. You know, what was the only thing we did, etc. and how to position ourselves? So I guess we made sure that we did not waste opportunities. Of course there were there were critics who say, you know, if you sit with them, you become part of the system.

FP: But then, like I said earlier, some of us had had decided that, look, if we're going to change this, we have to do this smartly and we have to do it from inside as well as from as well as with pressure from outside. So ICVA actually took the steps to make sure that it participated actively in the IASC process. And so we made sure that we did not waste our seats at the IASC principles. The IASC Emergency Directors Group. All now, you know, by now, we have so many groups now in the IASC system and ICVA was represented in many of them, in fact, in some of them not only is ICVA represented, the IASC asked ICVA to also nominate its members to come and be members of those boards or those advisory groups or those technical working groups. So it's been a great journey to see that happen. And and again, with the conscious effort as well made to make sure that those representations are not just of the big boys, but just the big INGOs. Although we need them also sometimes to be there because we can't deny that it will also not work, if you know, if it is only represented by only the smallest NGOs.

RW: Yeah, it's true. Yes.

FP: So ICVA strength is in its diversity. So that's where that's where we came together. And and I guess if you like the proudest moment, I think was when it was very clear at the World Summit that ICVA was acknowledged clearly as the representative, if you like, as the valid and legitimate representation of the humanitarian NGO world. And I think that was what our a pinnacle for which we moved on to even greater heights. So, yes, very proud of it.

RW: Well, that's good. So a good summary, it's a good lead in Faizal to my next question, which is looking more to the future. It's the next question on my list. Why do you think ICVA is important today, but even more so looking to the future? What what kind of directions would you see personally ICVA take for moving into the future?

FP: Well, I'm very glad for, for example, that the board leadership at the end of my tenure chose the right team leaders or the secretariat, which has lasted until today. And I must say that the current team, led by Ignacio at the Secretariat, have done extremely well and and they've not only done extremely well in their diligence and in the way they work, but they've also done very well in by showing that they are listening and that they are actually collating information and and support from members. So I think that's very, very important. And in today's world, I think ICVA's role is even more important now, especially to ensure that NGOs continue to have a voice at the highest levels within the international humanitarian system, but also because ICVA can play a role, especially in regions in parts of the world, in countries where local NGOs can't speak or have their humanitarian space or civil society space shut down, as well as international NGOs unable to come in because they are just blocked. So ICVA can play a big role in these in this part of the world, and it has been proven whereby ICVA has been able to be to be seen as a less threatening interlocutor, if you like.

FP: And so that's that's a very good role for ICVA to play. And I must say that again, congratulations to the current ICVA board and and secretary's leadership for actually listening to some of our recommendations. And I know this for a fact because I know I made a couple of those recommendations myself and I'm sure I wasn't the only one. But the secretariat and board actually followed through that in the following strategic plan for the next three years and 10 years, we actually have, for example, climate change as an area where ICVA will be putting some focus on. I told Ignacio when I was interviewed for my views on the next 10 years that if we want to remain relevant, we will have to have some voice in climate change. Climate change is going to be the biggest game changer and it's going to affect everything else, including forced displacement, refugees and IDPs, and it's going to affect humanitarian financing as well and how the humanitarian development nexus come together. So I'm glad that they have taken that on board and and they've also taken on board, although we are not going to be a health NGO network.

FP: But we cannot ignore the world we live in now, which is the pandemic world. And and again, although it's not a focus area like climate change is for the next 10 years or so, it is an area which is cross-cutting that ICVA has agreed to actually put in in all its focus areas. So if displacement and humanitarian coordination in financing, etcetera, in convening, because simply because we can't ignore the pandemic and its impact on both NGOs as well as the humanitarian world at large, both in terms of direct impact from the pandemic as well as indirectly, because we must also count the the now neglected humanitarian crises, which are which are receiving less attention and less money, less funding, less support because the pandemic is around. So, ICVA has to also include the pandemic, not just for the pandemic, but to ensure that we keep our eyes on the ball where crises are concerned and that we become the conscience for the UN system, for the for the Red Cross system, etc. to also keep the eyes on the ball and not lose track.

RW: Ok, well, that's good, that's a good summary. In fact, I was at the last annual meeting which had the whole focus on climate change. So you're very much correct about the focus on climate change and in the future, very much so. Last question. Could you think of one anecdote or something that's more personal that you can share with me and maybe with with ICVA. One anecdote, one personal experience, it would be very, very much on your mind just to share it personally.

FP: Well, I guess if there was one, it has to be because I was the first, so I guess it has to be the moment that that I was elected as chair of ICVA back in 2015. The support that I had, which was almost unanimous and the acknowledgement from the leadership of all other NGOs who were there, including some very significant INGOs who went

RW: To my understanding, you're the first person from the global south that became the chair of ICVA if I'm not mistaken.

FP: Or to do to actually be the chair of ICVA and not because of tokenism and to do so, not because, you know, I was a brown face, but for the simple reason that they felt that I was the best person to do it. And this was that we need him to actually lead. So I think I must say that was and still is one of the most memorable experiences of my life, not just of my humanitarian career, but also of my life, because I think it meant more than just being chair of ICVA from a cultural and philosophical perspective. I think it broke boundaries. It's no longer a mystery now or no longer a problem or an issue. From now on, if ever there was going to be a leader from the global south again meeting a not just by ethnicity, but also from the global south from where the organization is from. I still think that was quite a moment. And and it was representative of not just myself. I think what all my colleagues in the global south and not just from Mercy Malaysia, by the way, it's of all the all the other global south NGOs as well. And like I said, the efforts made by people like Ed, like Nan, like Penny, to actually push this through to actually be able to achieve that.

RW: Yeah, yeah, that's a great way to summarize our conversation and which I really appreciate. So thank you very much for all of your comments and all of your ideas. It's really great for me to listen to you this last hour, and I really appreciate and wish you the best in your future.

FP : Sure. Thank you, Bob. Thanks, and thanks for doing it for me as well.

RW : Thank you. I appreciate it and thank you for our conversation. I really appreciate. Thank you, bye, bye bye.

This conversation between Dr Faizal Pardus of Mercy Malaysia and Robert White was recorded in August 2021.

Founded in 1962, ICVA (International Council of Voluntary Agencies) is a global network of over 140 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active in 160 countries, operating at global, regional, national and local levels. Our mission is to make humanitarian action more principled and effective by working collectively and independently to influence policy and practice.

For more information about ICVA, and the history of ICVA visit [www. icvanetwork.org](http://www.icvanetwork.org).