



# REGIONAL DIRECTIONS PAPER

Latin America and Caribbean(LAC) Region 2023-2025

**LIVING DOCUMENT**

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A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK  
FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE  
HUMANITARIAN ACTION

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## 1. Executive Summary

This 2023-2025 regional direction paper sets the direction and focus of ICVA's work in the Latin America and Caribbean Region (LAC). It encapsulates our vision, recognizes our diverse membership, and illustrates the engagement between the ICVA Secretariat, the regional model with Paso-Libre/FM4 and members on key focus areas to better enable NGO principled and effective humanitarian engagement.

It will guide ICVA Secretariat's overall workplans and allocation of resources to the region. As an extension of the secretariat, ICVA's LAC Regional Strategic Direction Paper is guided by the ICVA 2030 strategy and leads by following the ICVA mission, "To make humanitarian action more principled and effective by working collectively and independently to influence policy and practice."

ICVA in LAC will add value to its members by influencing and advocating, collaborating, convening, connecting and brokering, analysing, explaining and learning and by supporting capacities of NGO and NGO Fora to further engage in the humanitarian system.

With the purpose of reviewing priorities to inform the strategic direction of ICVA for LAC during the period 2023-2025. This Regional Strategic Direction Paper presents a three-year road map for ICVA in LAC. It intends to act as a compass to support to remain focused on strategic priorities and overarching objectives.

The strategic direction is the results of a consultative process with ICVA Members, NGO Foras, and external stakeholders in 2022. This includes individual one to one conversation, the consultations at the NGO LAC Fora Exchange Workshop in Bogota 19-21 September 2022 as well as mission by Lina Gomez, ICVA LAC Coordinator, and Ignacio Packer, ICVA Executive Director to Bogota and to Panama to meet different stakeholders 22-23 September 2022.

The core elements of ICVA's work will be the focus areas recognizing the interconnectedness between them.

The following are the focus areas we will commit to for the entire period based on the overwhelming support expressed by the membership:

### Focus Area 1 - Forced Migration

ICVA will support members in their work to improve protection, assistance and durable solutions for refugees, IDPs, stateless persons and migrants in vulnerable situations.

## Focus Area 2 – Coordination

ICVA will work to strengthen the collective ability of NGOs to actively engage in, influence or lead humanitarian coordination mechanisms to ensure they are inclusive, contextualized and accountable.

## Focus Area 3 - Financing

ICVA will work to ensure financing of humanitarian action meets the needs of populations affected by crises while ensuring adequate NGO access to principled, quality funding.

The operational priorities for the focus areas are:



### 1. Promoting an Enabled Environment for Humanitarian NGOs

- Support meaningful participation of members (local and international) and provide access to regional and global opportunities and platforms (webinars, conferences, events, etc)
- Increasing ICVA membership and maintaining active engagement with ICVA members in the region, creating linkages with UN agencies and key regional actors, and supporting two pathways of information from and to global/HQ level and at the in-country level.
- Sharing timely, and relevant information to members and NGO Fora.

### 2. Support to NGO Fora

- Providing support to local NGO Fora and mixed NGO Fora to strengthen capacities and amplify their voices at the regional and global platforms.
- Supporting organizational capacity development of NGO Fora in strategic planning, governance, and human resource management.
- Play a leading role in supporting NGO coalitions, fora, and networks through sharing information, echoing their voices, strengthening advocacy and empowering and connecting the NGO Fora to any relevant global and regional policy and decision-making platforms.

- Extend regional learning and engagement opportunities for LAC members and key fora on ICVA focus areas such as localization, the nexus, climate change, protection in mixed flows of migration and access.
- Coordinate and Influence linkages and learning between national and international Fora through convening webinars, joint discussion, sharing information, and other mechanisms.

### 3. Collecting Evidence and Influencing

- Focus on analysing and building an understanding of regional dynamics in the countries of priority, and disseminate evidence-based research, necessary info and any other relevant info to NGO members.
- Collate data for evidence-based advocacy, case studies, briefing papers, research, etc on topics that are of high interest to members.
- Convene webinars, roundtable discussions, and other manners of communication to share knowledge on important topics, influence NGOs, and support collective advocacy.

ICVA in LAC will work in an inclusive participatory manner with its members and key stakeholders with reference to ICVA's 3-year strategic priorities and 2030 strategy. The ambition for ICVA in LAC is to grow in its reach and influence while empowering NGO and NGO Foras. In these three years, ICVA in LAC will need to be very focussed not to spread too thin the resources and work diligently, effectively, and efficiently towards the ICVA Journey to 2030 with its five ambitious transformations:



## 2. Elevator Pitch

ICVA in LAC Region aims to work as an effective NGO network that focuses on strengthening the collective NGOs advocacy and action to enhance coordination and create a positive impact on the people affected by humanitarian issues. Despite the region presenting a broad diversity of complexities and challenges, in the past years it has been possible to articulate a work to direct a collective, localized and strategic approach with NGOs in LAC.

With an approach to support mainly national organizations, Paso Libre and ICVA have been partnering since 2019 on the development of ICVA in LAC.

Recognizing the interconnectedness between the focus areas, Forced Migration, Coordination and Financing, the operational priorities are:

- Promoting an Enabled Environment for Humanitarian NGOs
- Support to NGO Fora
- Collecting Evidence & Influencing

### 3. Background

ICVA had a presence in Latin America since its inception and maintained a significant influence, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s. However, due to internal and conjunctural changes, the role of ICVA in the region gradually faded into the background.

Latin America and the Caribbean has experienced a significant increase in the number of people in need since 2018, climbing from 9.6 million people to 26.4 million in 2021.

This increase owes, in part, to the rising frequency and intensity of sudden-onset disasters and recurrent climate shocks, the devastating impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic (including being the world's hardest-hit region with 18.5 per cent of all global cases and 30.3 per cent of all deaths despite comprising only 8.4 per cent of the world's population), and challenging socioeconomic conditions that are leaving 287 million people in poverty or extreme poverty.

Since 2019, ICVA aims to work as an effective NGO network that focuses on strengthening the collective NGOs advocacy and action in LAC to enhance coordination and create a positive impact on the people affected by the emergency, humanitarian issues, and natural disasters. Despite the region presenting a broad diversity of complexities and challenges, in the past years it has been possible to articulate a work to direct a collective, localized and strategic approach with NGOs in LAC.

#### Some needed developments for the NGO community in the region:

##### Increased meaningful participation of local organizations

Particular focus by ICVA on the organizations' abilities to respond and the access the adapted added value that ICVA as a network provides.

### **Gain operational space for civil society organizations**

Organizations require to be empowered, develop key skills as well as benefit support for collective advocacy and negotiations to navigate and effectively manoeuvre in contexts of shrinking or threatened space.

### **Lower the barriers to effective engagement of NGOs with governments**

In the region to negotiate and resolve operational and bureaucratic impediments are a common problem. Some of the constraints include NGO registration, travel permits, project approval, remote partnership, risk-shifting, lack of understanding of the key areas for adaptations such as Localization, Nexus, Climate Change, Humanitarian Access, Negotiation, and other key issues of interest for NGOs.

The severity and complexity of the different crises, the mounting needs, the lack of funding, bureaucratic context and adversity require a rapid and effective response, at times to the cost of focussing on long-term priorities such as the Nexus, localization, gender mainstreaming, funding, coordination and principles of partnership.

### **Improve the articulation within the NGO community**

Lack of effective articulation is common in the region. It is reported as resulting from competition for funds, lack of trust, lack of principled partnership experience and of viewing collaborative advantages. Limited resources allocated to enhancing the capacity for local NGOs and Local NGO Fora has posed a challenge as well in the development and increased responsibility for local actors. However, there is often adherence to common global agendas, similar backgrounds and shared identity that can lead to an articulated and cohesive work.

## **4.The Evolving Humanitarian Environment in Latin America and Caribbean Region**

The Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region remains far from the dominant trends and discussions in the humanitarian sector. The wording used by ICVA and other is the “invisibilidad” of humanitarian issues in LAC at global level.

Humanitarian funding (and international cooperation flows) at global level have increased from 7'250'000 USD tracked on the Global Humanitarian Overview (GHO) to 26'000'000 USD in 2022. The 2010 global budget was 9,5 billion USD to reach 53 million people in 34 countries.

In 2023, it is 339 million people. This is an increase of nearly 24 per cent since 2022, or 65 million people. It means that today, one in every 23 people on the planet needs humanitarian assistance. As per collective NGO statement<sup>1</sup> December 2022, the 2023 GHO size is just a taste of what is to come as the effects of conflict, COVID-19 and climate change continue to magnify other drivers of humanitarian needs in years to come, amplifying existing and intersecting forms of inequalities and injustices, including gender inequality, experienced by marginalised groups.

However, for the LAC region, only the Venezuelan migration crisis and, to a lesser extent, the situation in Haiti and some largescale natural disasters have prompted humanitarian responses of a significant scale. Overall, the funds destined for the region have decreased comparatively. Highlighted by Colombia NGO Fora is the “invisibilidad” of the humanitarian situation in Colombia with funds reduced to worrying levels with consequences on the sustainability of NNGOs.

Well documented, humanitarian needs in the LAC region are expected to multiply in the coming years due to multiple factors.

The humanitarian context in LAC are already home to ever-present risks of climate and anthropogenic hazards and longstanding vulnerabilities related to structural poverty and chronic violence, the multiple emergencies of the last years created a complex and challenging humanitarian scenario that continues to increase needs well into 2023. While the COVID-19 pandemic, tropical storms, hurricanes, landslides had significant humanitarian consequences on their own, their collective impact and aggravating effect on existing needs is placing vulnerable populations such as women, children, indigenous people, LGBTIQ+ people, people with disabilities at even greater risk.

These crises leave millions of people in need across the LAC region, many of whom have needs related to gaps in livelihoods, protection, health, nutrition, education and basic water sanitation.

Five years ago, the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Haiti was the only one in the region, while now there are six (Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras and Venezuela). Levels of funding of these plans were between 24% and 47% (reference to the Financial Tracking System).

In global terms, in 2021, the LAC region received less than 3% of international humanitarian funding distributed including through the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPF). For some donors, such as Spanish cooperation, LAC remains a priority area, but other countries have gradually abandoned or reduced their work in the region from a humanitarian perspective.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.icvanetwork.org/resource/unprecedented-humanitarian-needs-must-shock-grand-bargain-signatories-into-action/>



## 5. Main Achievements of ICVA in LAC 2018-2022

The awareness of ICVA and achievements of ICVA in LAC Region creates expectations. In defining the regional directions 2023-2025, ICVA has also planned the resourcing and NGO engagement. ICVA will increase national/regional members as well as increase the outreach to NGOs. The partnership with Paso-Libre/FM4, Mexican national NGO, is serving as an important learning opportunity on a more localized ICVA engagement with NGOs. The next phase of ICVA's development in LAC (2023-2025) will consolidate the model with increased resources and a renewed MOU between Paso-Libre/FM4 and ICVA.

ICVA's geographic presence expanded to include representation in Latin America in 2019 following FM4/Paso Libre becoming an ICVA member in 2018, coupled with an in-person 3 months induction of Paso-Libre/FM4 director of policy in Geneva in 2019, MOU between Paso-Libre/FM4 and ICVA, yearly work plans and budgets as well as ways of working within the ICVA team. Since 2019, ICVA is piloting a regional coordination and staff secondment from Paso-Libre/FM4 for ICVA Secretariat's presence in LAC region with support of other ICVA Secretariat functions (not based in the LAC region).

ICVA's engagement in LAC region has resulted in an increased participation of members in regional (i.e., OCHA-Regional Office for Latin America (OCHA ROLAC), LAC RMD Coalition) and international fora of the humanitarian coordination system. ICVA's work in LAC is evolving rapidly, working in partnership with a local ICVA member. Senior management of both organizations monitor as a priority how these models impacts quality and impact of ICVA's work.

### Achievements include from 2019 to 2022:

1. Establishing communication with ICVA members in the Latin America region to share information, tools and guidelines
2. Increased awareness of ICVA and seeing more participation of members in regional and international discussions
3. Co-organisation of NGO consultations (i.e. UNHCR, ECHO) and support to collective statements (i.e. Venezuela pledging conference 2019)
4. Support the emergence and consolidation of NGO Fora. Some advances are the joint meetings and events between the Humanitarian Fora in Colombia and Venezuela (2021), the LAC NGO Fora Exchange in Bogota (2022), the National Leadership Workshop in Geneva (2022). These initiatives have resulted in the creation of directorates, a joint database, and WhatsApp chats to coordinate activities and operations in the field

5. Participation to OCHA-ROLAC meetings, LAC RMD Coalition
6. Communication material (i.e., ICVA video, translation of ICVA documents)

ICVA in LAC will reinforce its add value to its members by influencing and advocating, collaborating, convening, connecting and brokering, analysing, explaining and learning and by supporting capacities of NGO and NGO Fora to further engage in the humanitarian system.

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## **6. Priority 1 - Promoting an Enabled Environment for Civil Society**

ICVA's Mission is to make humanitarian action more principled and effective by working collectively and independently to influence policy and practice. This will be reflected in the work that we will establish with the members of the region that are responding to the several crises to guarantee that people are at the centre and aligned with the humanitarian principles as well as with the rest of the values that we promote in the network. Which are:

- We work towards a system that enables people affected by humanitarian crises to receive equitable access to quality assistance and protection rooted in international humanitarian and human rights law.
- We promote innovative approaches to humanitarian policy development implementation, and offer evidence-based, solutions-oriented advocacy.
- We promote equitable, inclusive engagement of NGOs and principled multistakeholder partnerships to realize the full value of diversity and to ensure the legitimacy of our work.

In this sense, we seek our support for the different NGOs that are in the region and that are part of the network align with our values and principles. In addition, our support is focused on strengthening capacities and collective work in advocacy that guarantees dignified and effective care for people suffering from various humanitarian crises.

One of the challenges facing the region revolves around making visible the needs that exist in global discussions. It seems that regional problems have faded in the collective imagination. However, this does not reflect the reality that afflicts millions of people in Latin America and the Caribbean. The work with the policy team in Geneva will be jointly planned with the LAC Regional coordination. The connection to the support to NGOs from the focus areas following global priority processes is core of the work.

ICVA's work on humanitarian coordination has included active engagement into all IASC architecture bodies (Principals, Operational Policy, and Advocacy Group (OPAG), Results groups, Deputies Forum, Emergency Directors Group (EDG), Focal points, and Humanitarian Financing Technical Team (HFTT) and promotion of a dialogue with humanitarian leadership. ICVA actively seeks broad input from its NGO members and NGO Fora, of which some are ICVA members, to inform its positions and interactions towards those it engages.

In addition to the regional humanitarian coordination mechanisms, ICVA will focus in 2023 and 2024 on the regional process in view of the anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees.

The 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees (Cartagena Declaration)<sup>1</sup> is heralded as one of the greatest accomplishments in the development of the refugee protection regime in Latin America. It is most frequently invoked as the source of a broad definition of who should be considered a refugee.

The regional refugee definition in the Cartagena Declaration was meant to provide a concise reference point to expand protection while swiftly responding to the growing plight of refugees who did not fulfil the 1951 Convention definition.

2024 will see the anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees and this is seen as an opportunity to challenge many Latin American states to champion the regional refugee definition, to take concrete steps to make it operable and to faithfully apply its contents has implications that go far beyond the side lining of the regional refugee definition.

Almost forty years after the Cartagena Declaration, officials processing asylum claims do not appear to know how to apply the regional refugee definition in a consistent and coherent manner. This element remains an important regional challenge for the protection of refugees in Latin America. The issues that are at stake are the loss of solidarity toward persons fleeing generalized violence or conflict in the region and the overshadowing of the refugee protection regime by the growing focus on security.

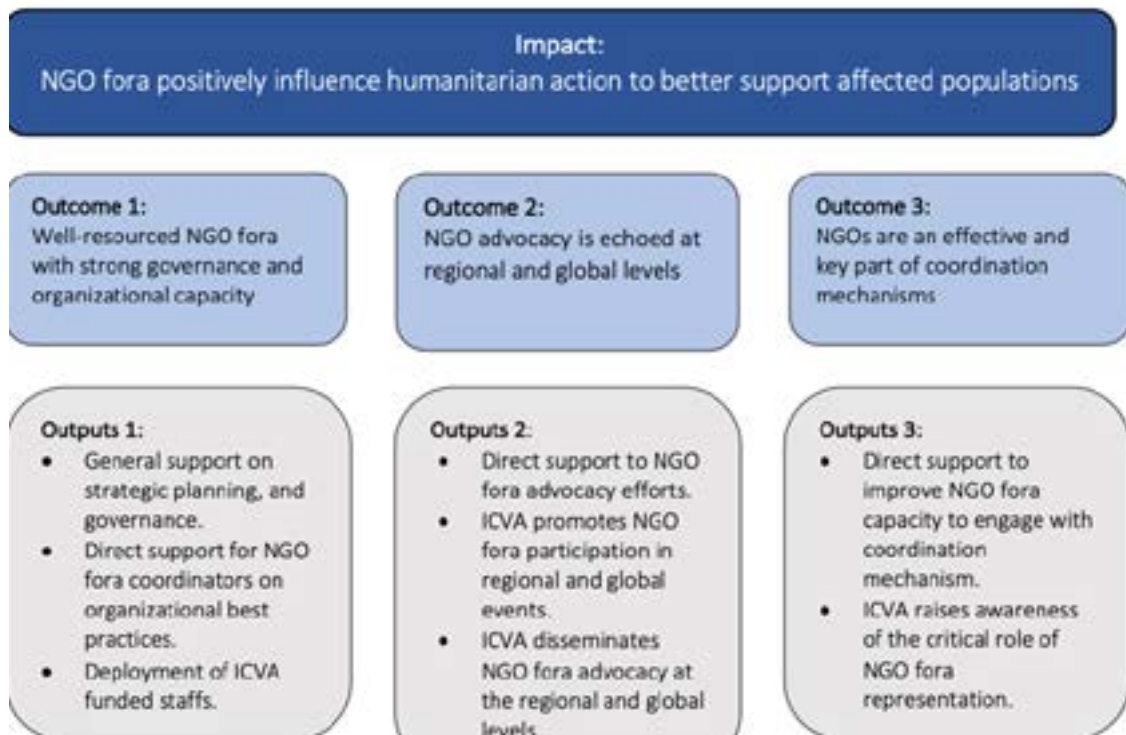
The Camino a Santiago, named after the leadership Chile is playing in the process, will be launched in 2023 by States with UNHCR to mark the 40 years in 2024 of the Cartagena Declaration.

ICVA will continue developing partnerships with LAC networks such as:

## **7. Priority 2 - Support to NGO Fora Programme**

In late 2021, ICVA commissioned the Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG) to conduct an evaluation of the ICVA NGO Fora Support Programme from 2018-2021. The evaluation will include a research and analysis process, leading to the development of recommendations for how to strengthen support to NGO Fora in the next phase of the NGO Fora Support Programme. The evaluation will be completed by April 2022 and will provide the basis for the specific focus areas of this project, which will be articulated based on the findings of the evaluation. Building on this evaluation, ICVA will take a more evidence- and needs-based approach to the delivery of NGO Fora support in 2022-23. This approach will ensure lessons learned from previous support to NGO Fora will help to highlight needs and areas for support, transforming evidence into impact at national, regional and global levels.

ICVA's NGO Fora Support Programme is the set of activities aiming at providing direct and adapted support to NGO fora to fulfil their collective responsibilities. ICVA has defined broad areas in which it knows it has the capacity to either deliver support directly or be in position to identify a suitable third party to provide that support. Those broad areas are described in the programme logic below:



ICVA's presence in LAC in recent years has been consolidated in the work established with the Fora in the region in a complementary partnership manner, proving its support and multiplying its collective advocacy and coordination efforts.

ICVA in LAC prioritizes working with NGO Fora in a complementarity partnership manner, proving its support its collective advocacy and coordination efforts.

ICVA supports NGOs Fora across the region. ICVA developed capacity and provided a platform for exchange on good practice, lessons-learned and thematic priorities. As from 2020, ICVA supported the Colombian Fora, now member of ICVA and having a seat for ICVA at the OPAG group in the IASC structure.

In 2021, particular focus was given to the Fora in Colombia and Venezuela, creating a learning space. In 2022, ICVA held an NGO For a meeting in Bogotá, Colombia with participation of national leaders from the Fora of Colombia, Venezuela, the recently created Fora of Peru and the LAC RMD Coalition. This learning event focused on advocacy, coordination, localization, negotiation, and humanitarian access.

Supporting Foras in the region has been strategic and key in the work of ICVA in the last years. Considering that the formation of these Foras is recent, ICVA's role has been to strengthen their processes, expand their capacities and provide tools that are available from the network.

## Priorities:

Continue supporting the strengthening of NGO Fora (the existing ones and those that can be created) through:

- Direct support to fora directors and their steering committees on best organizational practices.
- Capacity building – learning streams and direct advice – on engagement with country-level IASC structures (HCT, ICCG and clusters system).
- Promotion of LAC fora in regional and global events.
- Support to fora to develop strategic plans.

To have a strategic role in the articulation of a common agenda between fora and the development of regional and global advocacy efforts aiming at increasing the region's visibility.

- Continue promoting exchanges between fora in the region and with other regions.
- Promoting and disseminating country-level advocacy at the Geneva level.

## 8. Collecting Evidence and Influencing

As mentioned above, the LAC context is complex, and each country has its own unique set of identified challenges, gaps, and vulnerabilities. To highlight this, the following section breaks down the needs by country of focus for ICVA in the region.

### Venezuela

It is estimated that there are more than 7 million Venezuelan migrants and refugees in the world, and of this number, at least 5.9 are in Latin America and the Caribbean. Urgent action is needed to end hunger and malnutrition in Venezuela. This requires political will and increased funding to improve access to quality, nutritious food for Venezuelan children. Thus, humanitarian actors must be enabled to facilitate access to high-quality food and build community capacities for collective resilience initiatives<sup>2</sup>.

As the violence, insecurity, lack of food, medicine and essential services increases in Venezuela, people continue to leave the country in order to find a better chance of survival. However, for those who stay, the future is uncertain. This applies also to NGOs who are working in the country: in 2021, the Special Automated Registry of Non-Domiciled

<sup>2</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/venezuela-bolivarian-republic/venezuela-crisis-response-situation-report-hope-without-borders-january-june2022->

Non-Governmental Organizations (REGONG) was implemented by the government in order to manage international organizations that are in the country. This has generated additional bureaucratic barriers and impediments to the work of NGOs.

Given this complex context, ICVA's role in supporting NGOs is vital. ICVA supports the NGOs by providing tools, training and strengthening to the Fora of Venezuela whose mission is to serve as an interlocutor between international humanitarian organizations, expressions of civil society and the Venezuelan State, and ensuring that national-level issues that cannot find resolution in-country are brought up at the regional and global level.

ICVA also works closely with the R4V platform (the Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants), and shares all relevant information to its members, especially national organizations who might not have access to it otherwise.

35 NGOs are members of the Humanitarian Venezuelan Fora, and most of them are also active members of ICVA. ICVA has worked closely with the fora in the past, supporting its organizational capacity, the building of collective advocacy messages, and promoting learning and experience sessions with other fora in the region. They have a strong outreach to a number of national organizations in the country.

ICVA is looking at further strengthening the link with the Fora of Venezuela by including them in additional ICVA workshops, trainings and fora exchange workshops, activities which we support to guarantee a space for continuous learning to all fora.

The Fora in Venezuela has also been invited to become a member of ICVA.

## Haiti

Haiti is the country in the region that presents the most challenging context. On the one hand, it is one of the poorest not only regionally, but also worldwide. On the other hand, Haiti regularly faces multiple concurrent crises and is at high risk/vulnerability for natural hazards. The country is regularly affected by hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, and epidemics such as cholera and COVID 19. According to the Global Humanitarian Review, there are at least 4.9 million people in need, 2.2 of whom are children in need of humanitarian assistance. This is equivalent to 42% of the total population of the country.

The population is still reeling from the assassination of President Moïse last year on 7 July 2021, which has resulted in indefinitely postponed elections and a challenged Government facing growing gang violence, social unrest and insecurity, notably in the capital's metropolitan areas. Humanitarian access is limited or interrupted by the presence of organized crime and by the lack of capacity of the Police and local authorities

to respond and provide security. Transportation of supplies and materials is also being severely hampered by the continued shortage of fuel throughout the country, causing significant delays in the response delivery and high operational costs from providers. Acts of violence have caused the displacement of thousands of families and the capacity of organizations that provide care in the country is overwhelmed.

Haiti is undoubtedly a country that requires special attention. The conversation around Haiti has faded from the international agenda and connecting directly with the organizations that are in the field is a challenge due to the context that is presented. While humanitarian NGOs have been active in Haiti since 1998, no formal (i.e., with a dedicated secretariat and clear organizational structure) Fora has ever emerged. An informal CCO (NGO coordination committee) does exist, regrouping most major INGOs. ICVA's communication and support to the NGOs was facilitated in 2022 thanks to the creation of a voluntary position as CCO director, but that position was discontinued for 2023.

Currently, ICVA interacts with the NGOs in Haiti through individual CCO members, whilst promoting a more formal organizational setting inclusive of national NGOs.

## Colombia

Colombia presents a critical humanitarian scenario due to the ongoing armed conflict, widespread violence, and the impact of natural hazards. The country is the main recipient of migrants and refugees from Venezuela, and it is estimated that by December of 2022, there were at least 2.48 million displaced Venezuelans in Colombia, about 41% of all Venezuelan refugees in the region.

In addition to the challenge of providing humanitarian assistance to migrants and refugees from the ongoing Venezuelan crisis, the Colombia context experienced a deterioration due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in 2022, the humanitarian situation in Colombia remains complex and critical for affected Colombians, especially in rural areas. The Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) estimates that at least 7.7 million people require humanitarian assistance in Colombia. The most affected people are women and children, particularly those from ethnic communities located in the Pacific area, the border area with Venezuela, the North-Western zone and the Central-South zone of the country<sup>3</sup>.

The Humanitarian NGO Forum in Colombia was the first in Latin America to be targeted by our Fora Support Programme. This was in response to the political and social situation growing in 2019 in the country. The Colombian Fora is a member of ICVA since 2022, which has allowed us to secure them a seat in the Operational Policy and Advocacy Group (OPAG), which in addition to representing Colombia itself guarantees a voice for the region at the global level.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/colombia/colombia-2022-humanitarian-response-plan>



The Humanitarian Colombian Forum was established in 2018, and brings together humanitarian civil society actors in Colombia who attend to the needs of the population in times of crisis. It comprises a mix of 30 national and international humanitarian organizations, the majority of which are also members of ICVA, with an average presence in Colombia of 23 years. Their work covers 31 departments (out of 32 total). The Fora's organizations employ 7,024 humanitarian workers. (53% women, 47% men) of which more than 95% are national staff. Annually, on average, through the humanitarian response actions of the Fora's organizations, an average of 2.1 million people is reached annually. The Fora promotes the necessary consensus for the coordination, effectiveness, and coherence of the humanitarian response.

Both in 2021 and 2022, ICVA held workshops in Bogota that allowed fora in the region to share their experiences and lessons learned. ICVA will continue to work closely with the Colombian Humanitarian Fora to create a bridge for dialogue between Colombia and the regional and international humanitarian agendas. As a mixed humanitarian Fora, the Fora is also a key partner to reach and support national organizations in that country.

## **Darien Gap**

The Darien Gap is an area that largely comprises Panama and its shared border with Colombia. It is an inhospitable and dangerous place because of climatic conditions, jungled-covered terrain, and insecurity - the area is under the control of narcotraffickers.

In the last year, 2022, the Darien Gap has become the migratory route for thousands of people seeking to cross Central America, mostly with the intention of reaching the United States. According to UNHCR as of 30 September 2022, 151,582 people had entered irregularly by this route, surpassing the already record figure of people crossing through Darien during the whole of 2021 (133,726). In the month of September alone, over 48,200 people in transit were registered. <sup>4</sup>

The three countries that comprise Central America, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, share a series of characteristics and a common context. The subregion is continually hit by hurricanes and floods, in addition to having high levels of poverty, inequality and violence. In addition, there is a challenge when it comes to coordination mechanisms and constraints in humanitarian access.

In Central America, there are no NGO Fora dedicated to humanitarian assistance at country level. However, ICVA continues to map the participation of member organizations that work in the region and the needs that are found in those countries. It is worth mentioning that although there is no regional Fora, there are collective efforts such as the LAC RMD Coalition (see below) that has promoted the visibility of the needs in Central America.

<sup>4</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/panama/unhcr-mixed-movements-through-darien-2022-september>

The LAC RMD coalition is a strategic alliance of national, regional and international civil society organizations with regional coverage in Latin America and the Caribbean that work with refugee, migrant and displaced populations within the framework of international and regional principles and standards of Human Rights, International Refugee Law and International Humanitarian Law. Its objective is to create the capacities and conditions within the alliance to achieve a genuine and meaningful dialogue with the states and the refugee and migrant populations in the region, in such a way as to promote an effective and sustainable humanitarian response.

They seek to promote compliance by the states in the preparation and humanitarian response, in the short, medium and long term, in such a way that the public policies and programs of the states, as well as the technical, human and economic resources assigned are consistent and effective to achieve it.

## Honduras

In 2022, it is estimated that around 144,000 people were affected by the passage of tropical storm Julia, with 15 of the 18 departments of the country reporting damages. Prior to the impact of Tropical Storm Julia, in September, a national emergency was declared due to the rainy season.<sup>5</sup> In addition to the problems derived from the hurricane and flood season, there are problems of maternal mortality and malnutrition, increases in arboviruses infections (dengue, chikungunya and ZIKA).

The country has also seen an increase in the presence of migratory flows on the southeastern border of the country, and the surge in irregular migrants transiting through South and Central America, triggered by political, social and economic upheaval in several countries in the region, is overwhelming the response capacity of many countries and fueling an unprecedented rise in humanitarian and protection needs. This panorama conjugated to constraints in access sets a complex context for NGOs to provide humanitarian assistance.

## El Salvador

The climatic conditions to which El Salvador is exposed place it as a high-risk country. In 2020 alone, the country faced multiple emergencies, between the COVID-19 pandemic, tropical storms Amanda, Cristobal, Laura, Eta and Iota and a landslide in the Nejapa Municipality.

According to OCHA, The COVID-19 pandemic worsened the country's vulnerabilities, as described in the Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021 (HNO) for Central America. In 2020, extreme poverty increased by 4.3 percent, affecting 9.8 percent of the people.

<sup>5</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/honduras/honduras-tormenta-tropical-julia-informe-de-situacion-no-12-01-de-octubre-de2022->

The number of people facing food insecurity increased from 620,000 prior to the pandemic to about 1 million, mostly due to the economic crisis caused by COVID- 19, extreme climate events and structural challenges.<sup>6</sup> This panorama has become more complex as levels of violence have increased in the country, which is reflected in the high levels of homicides, feminicides and gender violence. In addition, the country is considered a source of migrants, while in recent months it has itself faced the challenge of receiving a massive flow of migration that crosses Central America with the aim of reaching the United States.

## Guatemala

According to the WFP, 40% of Guatemala's population inhabitants are identified as indigenous Mayans. As a result, any response must be adapted to the population's needs in terms of languages, culture and social structures. Despite its middle-income status, two-thirds of its population lives on less than USD 2 per day, and among indigenous people, poverty averages 79 percent.<sup>7</sup> Also, Guatemala has the highest gender inequality index in the region. Highly correlated to poverty, stunting among children aged 6-59 months is among the highest in the world and the highest in the region.

The context of inequality in the country generates conditions of greater vulnerability for the population since the country is in a region that is hit by climate change, hurricanes and floods. Humanitarian access remains a major challenge and some populations remain without assistance. It is estimated that the current humanitarian situation requires unprecedented action to help 4.8 million affected people, including 3.8 million in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.

## Localization

The bureaucratic context of the region conjugated with the higher requirements for accountability from donors and language barriers have made it difficult for local actors to access the resources of the humanitarian system. Despite this, many local partners in Latin America have achieved greater capacity, notably through learning work models in partnership with international organizations.

As part of our strategy, in LAC, ICVA will continue to call for wider and inclusive participation of local actors, and one of our main goals is to include local actors not only on our own network but into the different global, regional and in-country leadership and coordination platforms and structures.

<sup>6</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/el-salvador/humanitarian-response-plan-el-salvador-august-2021-december2022->

<sup>7</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/guatemala/wfp-guatemala-country-brief-november2022->

## 10. Target Countries/contexts, Stakeholders and Partners

### Priority countries/contexts

- Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Latin America and the Caribbean
- Humanitarian responses to violence in Central America
- Haiti's humanitarian situation

### Priority coordination mechanisms

- Integrated Platform for Refugees and Migrants of Venezuela (R4V)
- Alliance of international organizations with regional outreach in Latin America and Caribbeans working for the wellbeing and rights of refugee, displace and migrants populations (LAC RMD)
- Regional Group on Risks, emergencies and Disasters from Latin America and Caribbeans (REDLAC)

### Development of civil society partnerships

- Coalition for Venezuela
- [MMI-LAC](#) – Global Movement for children of Latin America and Caribbeans
- Bloque Latinoamericano...

### Priority regional donors

ICVA in LAC will continue to build regional and, where possible, country level relationships with key donors to support policy and practice.

Priority donors: ECHO, BHA, and Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID by its acronym in Spanish).

Though AECID may not be a major donor, ICVA should invest with support of ICVA members in its relationship with the Spanish cooperation on its existing and potential diplomatic and financial support. This should be with the PM in Geneva and the Humanitarian Action Office (OAH by its acronym in Spanish).

Spanish cooperation can contribute to open new fora in countries with growing humanitarian needs. ICVA engagement with and the role of Spanish humanitarian NGOs and, more generally, of those international humanitarian NGOs with a presence in Spain (a number are ICVA members) should be further explored.

## Priority UN Agencies

ICVA in LAC will continue to build regional relationships with key UN partners to support policy and practice including:

- UNOCHA Regional Office
- UNHCR Regional Office
- IOM Regional Office
- UNICEF Regional Office

## 11. Human Resources and Partnership with FM4 Paso Libre

[FM4 Paso Libre](#) (Dignity and Justice on the AC road) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the defense and promotion of human rights of migrants and refugees through comprehensive humanitarian assistance, advocacy, and research in the western Mexico. FM4 Paso Libre has been a member of ICVA since 2018. Framed by a partnership agreement, FM4 Paso Libre plays a coordination role in LAC for ICVA from 2019.

A three-year Memorandum of Understanding (2023-2025) sets out the terms and understanding between ICVA and FM4 Paso Libre for the effective support of ICVA's Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) regional strategy as per ICVA's LAC Strategic Directions for 2023 to 2025. Paso Libre and ICVA Secretariat will deliver in terms of activities and roles and responsibilities as per work plan adopted yearly by Paso Libre and ICVA.

Paso Libre and ICVA have been partnering since 2019 including the support by Paso Libre of staff time. To implement the ICVA LAC Strategic Directions 2023 to 2025, within the spirit of partnership, Paso Libre and ICVA have agreed to increase the human and financial capacities to support the collective work in the region.

This approach between Paso Libre and ICVA aims to be coherent on the support to national organizations. It is also considered as the next phase of the initiative to develop regional collective action in Latin America & Caribbeans (LAC) as per ICVA LAC 2023-2025 Direction Paper.

With this approach, ICVA re-affirms that multiyear, unrestricted funding combined with dedicated institutional development leads to stronger, more resilient organizations of all structures, sectors, and sizes—and deeper connections to the communities they serve.

ICVA funds Paso Libre for its expertise and time allocated to ICVAs LAC strategy. In addition, ICVA also allocates flexible, non-earmarked funds for capacity enhancement of Paso Libre. ICVA also agrees to support specific activities carried out by Paso Libre as per the yearly work plans.

## **12. Financing, and Resource Mobilization for the Regional Strategy**

This strategy is accompanied by an annual work plan and annual budget. Core activities will be financed from the core ICVA LAC budget serving as “deficit guarantee” for their funding sources.

During the period of 2023-2025, ICVA LAC will build on previous regional resource mobilization efforts and will aim to secure at least one funding partnership in 2023.

ICVA LAC will benefit 2023-2024 of funding from BHA Global Programme as well as funding for 2023-2026 from the International Solidarity Service of the Canton of Geneva. ICVA is pursuing funding opportunities built on ICVA member and ICVA Secretariat initiatives.

This will serve to contribute to sustainability of the work of ICVA in LAC and strengthen partnerships and collaboration in the region.

Resource mobilization opportunities pursued will be in alignment with the global and regional ICVA strategy (ICVA 2030), address a core ICVA LAC priority and be complimentary to the wider work of ICVA. All resource mobilization efforts will cover necessary human resource capacity to deliver commitments.

## 13. Communications

ICVA in LAC will work in line with the global ICVA communications enabling strategy to ensure members and partners have better access to relevant and up to date information about ICVA work in the region and its impact. This will be achieved through:

- Maintaining up to date regional mailing lists for members, NGO foras, UN agencies, international organizations, donors, regional actors, research bodies etc.
- Translating all key documents, including briefing papers, strategy documents etc., into Spanish availing them to members as soft and hard copies.
- Sharing the global monthly ICVA Bulletin in Spanish.
- Developing periodic consolidated LAC update for members and key Fora.
- Cooperating with the ICVA communication and membership engagement colleagues to support events and processes.

ICVA LAC will be cautious to avoid information overload by limiting the amount of email communication sent and combining multiple subject and topics where possible.

## References

### ICVA References

[ICVA 2030 Strategy](#) (Spanish)

[ICVA Strategic Priorities 2022-2024](#)

[Review of the ICVA NGO Fora Support Programme 2018-2021](#), Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG)

[ICVA Management response to the Review of the ICVA NGO Fora Support Programme 2018-2021](#)

### Other References

Consultations in 2022 with approx. 15 ICVA members and other stakeholders including OCHA, ACNUR, IOM, BHA, ECHO

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## Regional Hubs

### **Africa**

Nairobi, Kenya  
Dakar, Senegal

### **Asia-Pacific**

Bangkok, Thailand  
Islamabad, Pakistan

### **MENA**

Amman, Jordan

### **Latin America**

Guadalajara, Mexico  
(Coordination)

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