



A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK  
FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE  
HUMANITARIAN ACTION

To: ICVA Board members – Discussed and received at board meeting 16-17 March 2021

Date: 9<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

Subject: Management response to the Recommendations from the 2019-2020 Mid-Strategy Impact Study ([full report and summary](#)).

Dear ICVA Board members,

This Management Response to the Recommendations from the 2019-2020 Mid-Strategy Impact Study covers internal reflections within the ICVA Secretariat and action points to address the eleven points for future consideration in the report.

The report is very encouraging as it documents ICVA's "significant impact". It documents ICVA's "enormous reach and coverage". It indicates the high- cost efficiency as "ICVA seems to cover a lot of ground considering the size of the ICVA secretariat and its budget". It values the competence and capacity on the areas of focus. It notes the "overriding value on how it brings diverse actors together, respects differing views and promotes the power and influence of the collective over that of a single organization". All to do with ICVA's strength as a diverse membership organization anchored in soon 60 years of existence.

The consultants valued the quality of the work but raised concerns on the sustainability of this level of quality as they are concerned ICVA risk being spread too thinly across too many areas of work.



As ICVA continues developing its ten-year strategic framework (ICVA 2030) some points for consideration include:

<i>Strategy, Objectives and Positioning</i>	
1. Further consider how to define selected ICVA goals and positions more sharply where it makes sense to do so.	50% of the budget are earmarked grants with logical frameworks indicating goals, targets and indicators. The yearly global work plan presented to the board has 32 tracing indicators as well as goals and targets. The individual work plans as well as the regional hub and focus area work plans offer quite some detailed information on the expected results and the indicators. The work plans of the focus areas relate to the Theory of Change. The nature of humanitarian action limits some of the planning possibilities and we try as a team to keep staff time allocation to be agile and react to unforeseen situations. This is of course not in a yearly plan. We will continue to improve - with reasonable staff time allocation - the planning and in particular the priority setting on basis of evidence, ICVA's added value and on where influence lies. The ICVA 2019-2021 Strategy sets a challenging objective (page 13) to have by end 2021 an effective steering system informed by quantitative and qualitative indicators from the focus areas. We committed to measure and report on performance and regularly commission external, independent assessments of ICVA's work and impact. We feel this has been greatly achieved and we will embark in improving what we have with reasonable staff time allocation. The ICVA2030 sets the goal post in terms of what is defined as success and the ICVA 2022-2024 work plan - to be finalised in Nov 2021 - will include expected result, indicators and means of verification.
2. When formulating objectives, it is important to align objectives with the mainly indirect impact of ICVA work and to not overstate the direct impact ICVA seeks to achieve.	Importance of being realistic when considering contribution and attribution of change. ICVA secretariat will call for ICVA member support for technical support in terms of monitoring and evaluation.
3. Consider creating a more developed organisational level theory of change (TOC) to replace, consolidate, or complement the theories of change for each focus area.	The organisational level Theory of Change is described in the ICVA strategy 2019-2021. It is however not supported by a visual. The existing Theory of Change used during the 2019-2021 strategy will be reviewed in the light of the strategic priorities for 2022-2024. We understand that it is not only about setting the theories of change but of bringing the theory of change reflection within the team when having to reflect on influence and decide on strategies and tactics. This is an ongoing effort within the team and will be reinforced.
4. Continue to increase the context specificity of regional directions, working with Member organisations.	End of 2020, we did an internal review of the regional priorities set in October 2018 and set the regional strategic priorities for the coming years. This was done on basis of the regional consultations with ICVA members during the ICVA2030 consultations, and the regular interactions with the members and other stakeholders in the regions. We have opted for regional directions (adopted at executive level) rather than regional strategies (would then be adopted at board level) to provide the agility to change priorities as the humanitarian contexts develop in the regions.
5. Consider how increased physical presence in different regions or sub regions may impact public positions.	Regional and sub-regional as well as country specific public positions would need an internal evaluation with reference to the "country public positioning guidance" developed with the Programme Policy Advocacy Board Committee (2019). The issue of the tonality of the public positioning is and would probably remain a fairly controversial issue within the ICVA membership. Therefore the concrete guidance mentioned above. The issue does not seem to be related to physical presence in developing the "model for proactive positioning" but rather where the work load lies and the access to operational evidence.
6. Maintain attention to ensure critical constructive engagement without losing trust.	The humanitarian sector has challenges related to trust. This is an existential issue to which ICVA has immediate attention in the way it engages with different stakeholders in the sector and within the ICVA network. The ICVA2030 consultation valued the "honest broker" approach that ICVA is appreciated for (source ICVA2030 consultations). The issue of trust is complex and touches at many levels as discussed throughout the 2020 Learning Stream and Annual Conference. Complex because on the issues around risk and accountability but also on the principled partnership discussions, the localization agenda and the PSEA collective work to name just a few of the entry points. Trust will make or break a humanitarian response and ICVA takes the role of an enabler for trusted and honest relations.



<i>Organisational</i>	
<p>7. Go further on the impact of environmental change and how this impacts humanitarian landscape and ICVA as an organisation.</p>	<p>Addressing the impact of 'climate change' on humanitarian action is one of the transformations of the ICVA2030 strategy (2022-2030) which is to be adopted at the ICVA General Assembly in May (transformation 2 of ICVA2030). This results from high demand from ICVA members to have this focus. The consultants point is an encouragement for the adoption of this transformation of the ICVA2030</p> <p>The theme of "Climate, Environment and Humanitarian Action" is set for the 2021 ICVA Learning Stream as well as for the ICVA's Virtual Annual Conference on 25 and 26 May this year. The conference will be looking at NGO perspectives and looking at how we could adapt the way we work to be better prepared to climate/environment shocks and deliver/leave no one behind esp in the humanitarian context when delivering programmes to support refugees, displaced and vulnerable migrant populations.</p> <p>We also plan on looking at how as NGOs can we change and adapt to do no harm to the climate and environment in the way we work – now with a Climate Charter also on the way, this would be a great opportunity for NGOs. We will also be looking at what support is required for such big changes that need to take place. We also want to bring in other networks, climate/env change expertise, academics and of course donors/MS to the discussion. The aim is to have it adopted by the ICVA General Assembly in May 2021 and to resource the follow-up for implementation. This is done in connection with the ICVA members who have already gained experience in this area. A particular attention will be put on the impact measurement aspect as recommended by the Impact Study.</p>
<p>8. Build further on diversity, equity and inclusion within the ICVA network, ICVA governance and Secretariat.</p>	<p>Realising the full value of our diversity through being inclusive and fostering participation will be essential for ensuring our relevance, legitimacy and impact as well as truly living our values. We commit to protecting the rights of people and also to promoting best practices for safeguarding, ensuring protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and fulfilling a duty of care. It is encouraging the consultants put this forward as point for consideration as this is one of the transformations of the ICVA2030 strategy to be adopted at the GA in May 2021 (transformation 4 of ICVA2030). The diversity work plan 2021 support the planned developments as well as the work on PSEA and duty of care. In 2020, the ICVA secretariat and the board have worked on the 3 levels of work (governance, network and secretariat). The GA in May 2021 will be the opportunity for renewed commitment by the ICVA network and the up-coming ICVA board will likely take from the current board the aim of making the governance as more diverse with expected governance reforms for the GA in 2024.</p>
<p>9. Consider how the new normal following COVID 19 offers opportunities and not just threats for ICVA.</p>	<p>As covered by the consultants in the case study 5 : "Incorporating COVID-19 Response" and referring to the ICVA document on looking back at the ICVA Covid-19 response, in full agreement with the consultant in looking at the opportunities for changes in the humanitarian sector.</p>
<i>Capacity</i>	
<p>10. Continue to further develop collaboration and complementarity as core ICVA added value.</p>	<p>In the ICVA2030 strategy, the fifth transformation is on collaborative advantages and aims at leveraging ICVA's collaborative advantage rooted in a long history and established role to create agile and effective partnerships with diverse stakeholders. ICVA recognises and acts on the strong belief that creating partnerships is a necessity to be transformative in the way we collectively find innovative responses and durable solutions to humanitarian challenges. While we feel that we have track change on collaboration and complementarity, we recognise that it is a never ending task while being aware of managing the number of engagements due to risk of overstretch. We certainly recognise the needed particular attention to develop in ways of working or partnering with emergent initiatives, particularly refugee-led, women-led and youth-led organisations.</p>
<p>11. Further tap into the capacities of Members and other collaborators to complement the ICVA Secretariat work as a means to further build legitimacy, co-ownership and impact as well as for efficiency</p>	<p>Fully agree. ICVA's development and expansion will come through collaborative efforts between the Secretariat, members and between members themselves, taking advantage of the knowledge and connectedness of members. We expect this to be welcomed by donors and to potentially attract funding. We are very proactive in work with other recognised networks on developing the value and synergy of various actors creating opportunities for influence and, when opportunities arise, co-funded work. The membership strategy is based on the quality of the engagement with the members rather than on the quantity of members.</p>



The Impact Survey was presented at the ICVA donor governments meeting on 3rd March, and presented at Board meeting on 17th March 2021. The chair's report to the General Assembly will cover some points of the Impact Study on 18th May. The Impact Study will be disseminated through the ICVA Bulletin March edition 2021 (due 7<sup>th</sup> April). While the final report of the External Impact Study is made available in March, the findings and underlying discussions associated served to inform and confirm key elements of the ICAV2030 strategy to be adopted by the ICVA General Assembly in May 2021.

Focussed and personalised messages will be sent to different stakeholders including a 2-pager of the main points of the report as well as a visual with some of the data. I recommend the study be used by board members to contribute to board decisions on the final version of the ICVA2030 strategy as well as for the adoption of the 2022-2024 ICVA Strategic Directions. To this effect, you may find the case studies ([2019](#) and [2020](#)) a good support.

Our thanks to the external consultants of Sandstone Consulting, Clayton Beet and Adrio Bacchetta for the quality of service provided for this mandate. We sincerely appreciate the efficient way of working, flexibility and the level of detail and accountability demonstrated. Our thanks also to the ICVA members, partners and other stakeholders who gave time to share views in individual interviews with the consultants as well as to the ICVA secretariat team who provided reflections, data and other information.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ignacio Packer', with several horizontal lines drawn through it.

Ignacio Packer  
Executive Director