

ICVA and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion An Integrated, action-oriented approach

The short paper sets out the understanding and aspirations of the ICVA governance, secretariat and membership towards diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion as a key component of the ICVA 2030 Strategy

The ICVA 2030 strategy commits to transforming the ICVA network for impact by

- 1. Championing principled humanitarian action*
- 2. Addressing the impact of 'climate change' on humanitarian action*
- 3. Being globally distributed and locally rooted*
- 4. Being diverse, inclusive, and live our values*
- 5. Proactively engaging in agile collaborative partnerships*

Realising the value of diversity, equity and inclusion is central to achieving these transformations and what they mean for the ICVA Secretariat and the Network as a whole. Principled action, collaboration (at all levels), negotiating access, accountability to affected populations are all examples of issues that need to respect diverse perspectives, promote inclusive approaches and equitable outcomes.

While ICVA 2030 serves as an internal reference ICVA acknowledges how its work on DE&I must also connect with sector benchmarks such as International Humanitarian Law (IHL), the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) and Humanitarian Principles more broadly.

ICVA must adopt a culture that promotes, embraces, and supports systems, structures, policies, practices, and internal processes that reflect its principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

ICVA will proactively create an inclusive, environment ensuring the voices with the greatest legitimacy and authenticity are those that most influence positions and outcomes achieved. To achieve this ICVA commits to focus on action and on building a dialogue that improves mutual understanding or testing new approaches, rather than engaging in tokenism or box-ticking exercises that only deal with DE&I in superficial terms.

Definitions

Diversity - different ways of being and thinking. In having a different gender, ethnicity, race, age, disability, geography, sexuality and other personal or contextual identities, people bring different views and perspectives that would be missing without them.

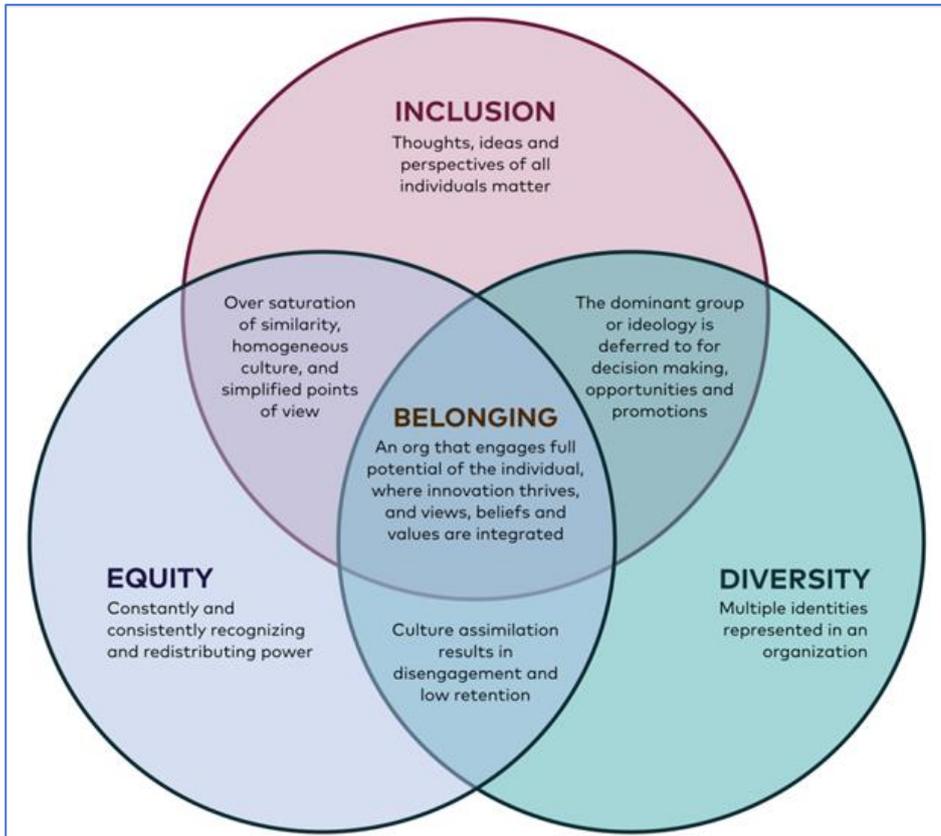
Equity – achieving fairness, ensuring equitable¹ opportunities towards all stakeholders appropriate to their identity and context. Achieving equity requires purposeful action to address imbalances between privilege and marginalisation.

Inclusion- bringing people in to be part of shaping, deciding, and influencing choices or actions in which they are implicated and enabling all to add their maximum value.

¹ Note: For clarity equity differs from equality. Equity=fairness, Equality = sameness

Interdependencies

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are distinct while also being interdependent as indicated in the diagram below. Adopting a holistic approach from the outset is key to success, as working on only one or two components risks not only slowing progress, but also taking us backwards.



While many ICVA Members will have been exposed to differing nuances of DE&I and their relationships, there is likely to be consensus on the notion that they are deeply interconnected and that a holistic approach is needed, regardless of definitions and detail.

Key Elements of ICVAs approach to DE&I

In realising Diversity Equity and Inclusion ICVA recognises the importance of ...

Being prepared to work on DE&I, means addressing power imbalance: realising DE&I requires ICVA to identify the root causes and act upon power imbalance. This requires a preparedness to change and a commitment to support each other as we transition to achieve change.

DE&I as a pathway for improved impact: Being a network ICVA is intrinsically dependent on exploring and maximising the potential of a collective effort. While embracing DE&I is the right thing to do in terms of how to treat people and entities within and outside the organisation, progress on DE&I is also central to ICVA maximising its impact.

The imperative of a holistic approach: ICVA commits to a holistic approach working on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion together. While constantly reflecting on the diversity of our members and nature of our engagement, we will proactively seek to include stakeholders and ensure equity in our outcomes and how we treat people: internally and externally

Openness to interpretations through Contextualisation: ICVA recognises the complexity of DE&I issues, and respects that not all cultures and people see them the same way. ICVA commits to contextualise and adapt approaches while staying true to its values as an organisation. When compromises are made, they will be made knowingly with justifications shared. Where there are differing views, the reaction will be to engage and understand rather than judging quickly.

DE&I in ensuring we fully explain choices: ICVA embraces a diversity of views, seeking bold, equitable and progressive outcomes. Diversity of perspectives will not result in lowest common denominator outcomes, rather the differing angles will force ICVA to examine its choices, ensuring they are truly aligned to values, need and impact, not just habit.

DE&I requires an integrated, adapted approach: ICVA will consider the DE&I aspects related to all aspects of its work, adapted to context, rather than seeing it as a stand-alone or parallel initiative. ICVA commits to examine its network and adapt how stakeholders are included in decisions, actions, and accountability processes

The need to prioritise the most marginalised: While some aspects can take time, ICVA recognises the need to act proactively on gross imbalances, privileges or biases that result in marginalisation. At the same time ICVA will be cautious of the polemics generated by 'sloganeering' DE&I (eg decolonising, or de-westernising). Such approaches, while often well intended, risk emphasising division rather than constructive rebalancing.

Expressing DE&I inwardly and outwardly: For those that are a part of and, or actively collaborate ICVA network, the ultimate DE&I aspiration is that all have a sense of 'belonging' to ICVA or the ICVA action in which they are engaged. For stakeholders external to ICVA, with different identities and with value-sets that may or may not align to ICVAs, the DE&I aspiration is that all feel 'respected'.

Accepting that we are all on a journey: Addressing imbalance starts with individual reflection and action; it's about people not paper policies, and each person is on their own journey. ICVA recognises DE&I as a living process that requires a constant cycle of learning, accountability, and adjustment. It takes time to build a culture and as people change or dynamics ebb and flow, there will be a need to continue to build and at times rebuild aspects that are lacking.

Making it happen

ICVA is regarded as one of the most diverse and inclusive global humanitarian networks². Great progress has been made, but we know we can do better: especially how we connect a lever off our regional presence.

Where change is needed it must be led by all in ICVA but should begin with those governing and those leading the executive who need to model the inclusive behaviours, as change needs to be imbedded at all levels.

While this paper serves as a common reference for DE&I, the nature of conversations and actions will be adapted to whether they are towards and within the Membership of ICVA (the Network), the Secretariat and partnerships or relate to the sector as a whole.

² As reported in independent ICVA Impact Studies

Towards our Membership:

- ICVA greatly values the diversity of its Membership. To maximise the potential this offers ICVA needs to ensure power is distributed equitably¹. ICVA's ways of working will seek to address and take account of the imbalances of resources, capacities and information.
- The diversity, equity, and inclusion of ICVA's governance will be reflected in the Board of ICVA, but moreover will also be reflected in how the Board engages Members at and between General Assemblies to inform the choices made.
- ICVA will provide thought leadership and reach out to create dialogue between the Membership to build a common understanding and to discuss if there are common standards of DE&I that should be aspired to as a criterion for Membership
- ICVA will enhance its impact through ensuring a diverse representation of members when seeking feedback and offering engagement opportunities, focussing on those closest and most legitimate to engage.
- ICVA's leadership at all levels will define indicators for success and will be accountable for progress on diversity and inclusion.

Towards those working for and with ICVA

- ICVA will ensure a safe, caring, and equitable workspace for all who work and engage with the Network. This will include reviewing key processes and decision-making systems.
- ICVA commits to a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination be they issues of gross misconduct or microaggressions of any type.
- ICVA will ensure that staff and members are aware of and value the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- ICVA will continue to build and retain a workforce and working culture that reflects its values and reflects the diversity of the Membership and the contexts in which they work. ICVA will ensure equitable approaches to recruitment, performance and towards opportunities for professional, career development.
- ICVA's investment and contextualisation in regional hubs and approaches will be a key pathway for realising DE&I.

Towards the sector

- ICVA will be an active voice in promoting the link between DE&I and realising impact in humanitarian action. As stated earlier in this paper, principled action, collaboration (at all levels), negotiating access, accountability to affected populations are all examples of issues that need to respect diverse perspectives, promote inclusive approaches and equitable outcomes.
- ICVA and its members will be prepared to call out systemic imbalances in the international humanitarian aid system, rooting positions in evidence, avoiding tokenism, or simply aligning with polemic positioning.
- ICVA's integrated approach on DE&I will result in issues being raised as components of the initiatives in which ICVA is engaged (eg forced migration, coordination, financing). This will be reflected in dialogues with donors, NGOs, the UN and governments.