



March 17, 2020

COVID-19

NGOs critical to the delivery of principled and effective humanitarian assistance

ICVA's first-ever [Virtual Annual Conference](#), on 18 March, is hosting inspiring discussions on risk to principled humanitarian action and in turn the risks taken by NGOs to deliver effective and efficient humanitarian assistance to those most in need. The current major disruptor, COVID-19, is inescapable in the discussions.

Ahead of the conference, staying true to [ICVA's mission](#), the [ICVA board](#) calls to adhere to the **basic humanitarian principles** of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence. It insisted that any measure and response to the COVID-19 should be grounded on the right to enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

In addition to the issue of access to health systems of some marginalised groups, an increasing number of **COVID-19 cases are now being identified in fragile states with weak health systems and ongoing humanitarian operations**. Scaling up preparedness and response to COVID-19 in these contexts has been in [ICVA's advocacy agenda](#) since end of January.

A truly global solution

Within the [Inter-Agency Standing Committee](#), ICVA is contributing in developing a truly global solution: an **aggregated global humanitarian response plan** for COVID-19. An appeal that will be updated as needed to reflect the evolving situation. The aim is to have a more coherent global response to address people's survival and protection on diverse levels of contamination and capacities as well as to better engage in an integrated response beyond public health issues and addressing **other key humanitarian implications** such as protection.

People centered

All should have equal access to health services and treatment, today more than ever. ICVA members are engaged in various actions aiming to ensure accessibility to health care **without discrimination and reduce stigma** faced by people affected by COVID-19 in particular relating to ongoing humanitarian operations. Stigma and discrimination are not only wrong but counterproductive, both for an individual's own health and for public health outcomes in general. The needed response includes listening to people affected by the outbreak and establishing trust and communication even before the disease burden rises.

Protection of the most vulnerable in ongoing humanitarian operations

With the diversity of our membership and the 20 billions USD operational footprint of ICVA's members, ICVA members are doing their utmost to step up work to protect **the most vulnerable in ongoing humanitarian operations** such as the millions of conflict-affected people living in cramped refugee and displacement sites or living in other vulnerable situations.

Support for NGOs to scale up intervention

NGOs are currently taking numerous measures to comply with government restrictions. At the same time we need, urgently and systematically, to **scale up humanitarian action** to prevent the virus from creating havoc in vulnerable communities. For this, we call on donors to make emergency funds available to scale up responses and support the safety of frontline local and national humanitarian workers while delivering on their mandates.



Sustained resources for other humanitarian interventions

While global attention is diverted by COVID-19, it is fundamental that **resources are sustained in ongoing humanitarian contexts**. We cannot afford to exacerbate vulnerability by leaving needs - largely because of conflicts and extreme climate events – unattended.

Investment in local actors

The humanitarian community should further enable the **ability of locally based humanitarian actors to respond more rapidly and to maintain adequate capacity**. As addressed in ICVA's briefing papers, "[Localization Examined](#)" and "[Unpacking Localization](#)" this will also increase the quality of the assistance provided. A more localized approach to international support for the COVID-19 response, will allow international actors to reinforce local efforts and help scale these efforts effectively.

Trusted leadership by donors

NGOs are meeting extraordinary challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The utmost is being done to deliver for those who need us the most. With a close dialogue, in a spirit of trust, NGOs aim at keeping donors updated on how the operations are impacted, where reallocations are needed, where flexibility should be ensured. Donors have to show **leadership by being supportive and dialoguing with NGOs** on extraordinary measures to manage the complex situation.

A real risk-sharing attitude

NGOs and other humanitarian actors are facing challenges in an increasing number of locations caused by travel restrictions, supply chain disruptions, the duty of care to avoid staff being exposed to COVID-19 and transmitting the virus to communities.... This is a time where ICVA calls on the diverse NGO community, on donors and on other partners to put in place **exceptional measures for quick decision-making, flexibility and a real risk-sharing attitude** as developed in ICVA's recently launched briefing paper, "[Risk and Humanitarian Culture](#)."

NGOs are critical to the delivery of effective, principled humanitarian assistance. We witness the needs. We implement the majority of projects. We are challenged today, probably more than ever, to ensure we remain able to stay and deliver across the system. This can only be done with true global support translated into solidarity in delivering principled humanitarian assistance.

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