EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NGO fora exist to address the specific needs of NGOs, fill gaps in other mechanisms, and in response to actions of the UN or host-Government. NCCI members clearly believe that NCCI addresses the majority of their needs that would otherwise not be met. Article 8 of the NCCI Articles of Association state that the NCCI members will identify issues for inclusion in the Strategic Plan. At the NCCI Annual General Assembly in March 2014, members expressed a desire to have a clearer understanding of the role and capacities of NCCI. The NCCI Board, and Secretariat in turn called for greater commitment from NCCI members. It was agreed that NCCI would review its strategy. A Strategic Planning Workshop was conducted on 17 November in Erbil, Iraq as part of this review and to give members the opportunity to identify issues for inclusion in the Strategic Plan. The main objectives for the workshop was to identify what NCCI members wanted NCCI’s mission and Strategic Objectives to be. This was achieved. Twenty organisations were represented at the workshop out of 85 members (and six observer organisations).* The day commenced with the election of three new NCCI Board members. The strategic planning component of the day consisted of:

1. Operational Environment Analysis
2. Mission Analysis
3. NCCI Strengths and Weaknesses
4. What Success Looks like
5. Confirmation

The NCCI General Assembly crafted, and agreed on a new mission statement, along with three Strategic Objectives. Members were extremely clear that they wanted NCCI to focus on advocacy, support services, and information exchange.

NEW MISSION

NCCI is a member-led organisation that coordinates principled, collective NGO action in order to foster development, address humanitarian needs, and promote respect for rights in Iraq.

Strategic Objective one:
NCCI will act as the NGO focal point for internal and external actors. This includes sharing information and facilitating contact between stakeholders.

Strategic Objective two:
NCCI is to create the enabling environment for NGOs to advocate for the rights and needs of people in Iraq.

Strategic Objective three:
NCCI is to provide the services, advice, and capacity building to support NGOs in order to enable development, address humanitarian needs, and promote respect for human rights in Iraq.

* The NCCI Charter will need to be updated with the revised mission statement. A quorum of NCCI members is required to alter the Charter. As a quorum was not in attendance at the GA (at least 30 percent of members in attendance at the meeting), confirmation of the revised mission statement will be obtained by the Secretariat by email.
**Methodology**

The workshop was conducted at the Classy Hotel Conference Room, in Erbil, Iraq. All 85 NCCI members and observers were invited to attend. The NCCI Secretariat encouraged attendance by communicating multiple emails and verbal reminders to all members. Twenty members attended the workshop including two of the four existing Board members. There were four national NGOs in attendance.

Throughout the workshop participants conducted a small amount of individual brainstorming and reflection. The majority of discussion occurred in small groups, which was regularly consolidated through plenary discussion.

The workshop was conducted in five distinct, and complimentary phases that each built on the previous phase. The five phases were:

1. Operational Environment Analysis
2. NCCI Mission Analysis
3. NCCI Strengths and Weaknesses
4. What Success Looks Like
5. Confirmation

When referring to NCCI in this report, it is inclusive, including the NCCI Board, Secretariat, and Members. If specific identification of the Board, Secretariat or Members is required, this will be done.

Questions used during the various small groups and plenary discussions were identified after reviewing other evaluations by UN agencies, and analysis conducted by groups such as ICVA. Questions were also inspired from the member-survey that NCCI administered earlier this year.

NCCI Secretariat staff participated in and contributed to small group activities. NCCI staff brought a unique and balanced perspective to discussions, enriching the workshop outcomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schedule for Strategic Planning Workshop</th>
<th>0945 to 1045</th>
<th>1100 to 1230</th>
<th>1230 to 1330</th>
<th>1400 to 1500</th>
<th>1530 to 1600</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Operational Environment Analysis</td>
<td>NCCI Mission Analysis</td>
<td>NCCI Strengths and Weaknesses</td>
<td>What Success Looks Like</td>
<td>Confirmation</td>
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Operational Environment Analysis

The operational environment analysis identified key areas and issues – external to NCCI – that will have a direct influence on NCCI. The context in which NCCI’s activities take place is essential to consider when we analyse what NCCI may do in the future. We started with an individual activity where participants were asked to identify their two main operational priorities. Participants were then asked to identify the two issues that cause them the most concern i.e. operational gaps.

It was immediately clear that all of the workshop participants are focusing on five issues:

- Human resources,
- Coordination,
- Operations,
- Advocacy, and
- Funding

It was also apparent that the six areas of most concern to participants are:

- Human resources,
- Coordination,
- Operations,
- Advocacy, and
- Funding,
- Government engagement, and
- Security.

In small groups, participants answered 11 questions to help facilitate discussion and analysis of the operational environment.

The questions were:

1. Where are leadership and coordination gaps?
2. Is HCT representation adequate? Should NGOs co-lead Clusters?
3. What advocacy needs remain unaddressed?
4. When do (and do not) NGOs have a shared voice?
5. Are NGOs partners or competitors or something else?
6. Are international and national NGOs given equal voice within the broad humanitarian community?
7. What are the UN’s strengths and weaknesses when compared to what they can achieve in other similar environments?
8. Where are conversations had about civil-military relations, NGO regulations, humanitarian access, quality of humanitarian response, and accountability to affected populations?
9. What other mechanisms existed or now exist that provide alternative avenues for coordination? How does this mechanism relate to those alternatives?
10. Who are the key actors that NCCI engages? How is this engagement done? What gaps exist with engagement?
11. What has NCCI’s impact been on this humanitarian environment in Iraq?

The small working groups spent about 30 minutes discussing these 11 questions and then presented their results to the plenary.
The plenary discussion highlighted the common concerns that many participants have about leadership and coordination of the humanitarian community in Iraq. One of the main reasons for this is the rapid turnover of personnel within UN offices and agencies and within NGOs. It is worth noting that participants also complained about duplication of meetings and meeting fatigue. More meetings are not required – what is needed is better planned, managed and facilitated coordination activities. This is compounded by inconsistencies between various coordination mechanisms i.e. sectors working groups and clusters operating at the same time. One notable reason for this is the often-repeated complaint about the current Humanitarian Coordinator being ineffective, and a Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) that is not representative of the entire humanitarian community in Iraq. The HCT meetings are seemingly poorly coordinated and announced without sufficient notice given to HCT members. In most humanitarian settings, HCT members are representatives of their respective communities and thus need time to engage with them. This is not occurring in Iraq. Meaningful engagement of NGOs, by UN agencies and offices, is not present and corrupting coordination efforts and programming activities. Only some NGOs seem to be engaged with current coordination mechanisms. This was perhaps best illustrated by some national-NGO participants not knowing what the HCT was, let alone how they could and should be engaging with it. The UN and HCT can - in many emergencies – add significant value to humanitarian and development activities through their strong and productive relationships with government authorities. Neither the UN, nor the HCT, has adequate relationships with the Iraqi Authorities and participants saw this as a significant and missed opportunity.

The lack of an involved and effective Government in Iraq, as well as inconsistencies in practices between different governorates, makes for additional challenges for operational actors; especially when leadership within the humanitarian community is lacking. It is not surprising to note that participants also lacked links with local authorities, making programming and administration more challenging than it otherwise might be.

The outcome of poor humanitarian leadership, combined with inadequate engagement with the Government, is duplication of aid activities and programming that is not as effective as it could be in Iraq.

Despite strong similarities in focus, NGOs do not seem to have a shared voice in Iraq. During the recent visit of John Ging, NGOs were able to agree on common messages, however this appeared to be atypical and not something that is done regularly. Participants agreed that there is a collective responsibility to find a common voice and to ensure a more inclusive environment for operational coordination and shared messaging (advocacy).

Participants specifically discussed UN agencies and their role in the operational environment in Iraq. Participants were concerned that most of the institutional funding seems to be channeled via UN agencies. Participants felt that channeling funds via UN agencies limits program flexibility, as well as bringing with it unnecessarily cumbersome administrative requirements to be an implementing partner. The short-term duration of UN staff in Iraq, as well as the wrong UN staff, was mentioned as detracting from what the UN should be able to achieve in Iraq. It was agreed that there is not one – consistent - UN. All the UN agencies are different and require different engagement. This was seen as a disadvantage and the participants would prefer to see more consistency – when possible – from UN agencies. No UN agency or actor is taking the lead with CivMil Coordination,
which concerned some participants. Similarly, there is no space for humanitarian access to be discussed as a community, and when it is discussed it is done bilaterally between actors. Participants agreed that the UN produced good-quality daily media reports that are useful to those people who receive it. Overall, there was a significant dissatisfaction with all of the UN agencies and offices’ performance in Iraq.

When asked about local and informal coordination activities, participants mentioned that some national NGOs were coordinating activities at the local-level amongst themselves, however this coordination and information was not being linked with the traditional humanitarian coordination architecture and thus this information was being missed. Participants also mentioned that because of a lack of meaningful engagement on many issues, NGOs regularly conduct bilateral discussions on a variety of issues that could more productively be discussed as a community if an appropriate space was created.

Participants felt that NCCI generally engages more with NGOs, and less with donors, UN or Government representatives. NCCI’s engagement was described as disproportional the importance of the actor they are – or could be – engaging.

**Mission Analysis**

NCCI Secretariat asked for a clear articulation of what NCCI’s mission should be for the next three years. A mission statement should be a clear and concise declaration of NCCI’s purpose and explains why NCCI exists.

In an uncomplicated manner, the mission statement should clearly explain the reason NCCI exists. The mission statement should guide the actions of NCCI, simply explain NCCI’s overall goal, provide a path, and guide decision making via the Strategic Plan.

Currently NCCI has a broad mandate to “assist NGOs”, which has included:

- Coordination (establishing working groups, and facilitating meetings)
- Capacity building (training events)
- Relationship management (ongoing engagement with NGOs)
- Advocacy (public statements, social media campaigns, round table events)
- Information management (website, mapping, field reports)
- Service support (advice provided on topics including organisational registration, visas; and posting job vacancies).

NGO fora generally provide two to three of these eight services to members:

1. Advocacy
2. Assessments, monitoring, evaluations, & learning
3. Operational coordination
4. Safety and security
5. Services and advice
6. Situational analysis
7. Strategic decision making
8. Training
After reminding participants that this strategic plan has a three-year life, participants were asked to identify which two services they would like NCCI to focus on. Participants were asked to write their results on post-it notes and put them on the wall. The vast majority of participants wanted NCCI to focus on **advocacy** (three times more than any other activity). Participants, to a much lesser extent, also wanted NCCI to assist with **information exchange** and **support services**.

It was agreed by participants that influential and consistent messaging from the NGO community and HCT was sorely lacking. The participants clearly identified common areas of concern during the Operational Environment Analysis and it was agreed that these issues could easily form common talking points.

Participants agreed that NCCI should not do everything, especially when many activities are within the mandate of other – well-funded – organisations such as OCHA. When these services are not provided, NCCI should advocate for this support to be provided.

In small groups participants were asked to identify why NCCI existed. This encouraged lots of constructive debate and reflection, resulting in the following mission statement:

**NCCI is a member-led organisation that coordinates principled, collective NGO action in order to foster development, address humanitarian needs, and promote respect for rights in Iraq.**

It was important to participants that the mission statement reflect several elements, including both development and humanitarian action, as well as having an end-state that focuses on beneficiaries (as opposed to NGOs).

### NCCI Strengths and Weaknesses

NCCI’s relevance to the NGO community has the potential to be significantly increased. There are considerable issues that NGOs want improved and there is recognition of the power of a collective voice. NCCI could be a strong advocate on behalf of the NGO community in Iraq. NCCI could also increase the voice of national NGOs by facilitating more access to existing coordination mechanisms, as well as ensuring that national NGOs are meaningfully engaged on all relevant issues.

Several participants expressed concern that the structure of NCCI, in particular its Board, does not facilitate meaningful output by NCCI. There was debate about whether the current Board should become more involved in management (i.e. shift from a Board of Directors, to a Board of Management). Another suggestion included having a Steering Committee in addition to the existing Board. A third suggestion was to maintain the current structure, and supplement this with active and relevant working groups that reflected the needs of NCCI members.

Participants expressed dissatisfaction with some NCCI led meetings that lack direction and focus, and do not give people enough notice of meeting times and objectives. Participants also emphasized that NCCI should have better relationships with Government Authorities than they currently do.

Whilst NCCI needs to work closely with national NGOs to overcome some of the challenges that currently prevent meaningful national NGO involvement, NCCI must ensure that it remains reflective of all NCCI members.
There was a lack of knowledge from members about the financial arrangements and cost-effectiveness of NCCI.

Some participants highlighted that NCCI needs a very strong Secretariat to perform its duties, including holding the Humanitarian Coordinator to account on behalf of NGOs and people in need in Iraq. Participants want NCCI to take a leadership role that is assertive, that facilitates improved action, and mobilizes all relevant actors to important issues.

NCCI should also be more active in defining roles of NGOs on the HCT, and identifying areas where NGOs can add value to the current humanitarian architecture. Participants also expect NCCI to ensure that coordination activities focus on all of Iraq, not just Erbil. There is concern that NCCI’s representation is not consistent across Iraq.

What Does Success Look Like

After confirming NCCI’s new mission statement, and taking into account participants desire to see NCCI focus on advocacy, support services, and information exchange, small group discussions occurred to identify possible objectives for NCCI. It was explained to participants that these objectives would form the basis of the Strategic Plan’s logframe.

The three-synthesized objectives are:

**Objective one:**

NCCI will act as the NGO focal point for internal and external actors. This includes sharing information and facilitating contact between stakeholders.

**Objective two:**

NCCI is to create the enabling environment for NGOs to advocate for the rights and needs of people in Iraq.

**Objective three:**

NCCI is to provide the services, advice, and capacity building to support NGOs in order to enable development, address humanitarian needs, and promote respect for human rights in Iraq.
Participants agreed on the Board maintaining their governance and strategic oversight of NCCI's Secretariat without getting involved in operational oversight or management. In order to ensure that the NCCI Secretariat is responsive to its members, working groups will be established, facilitated and supported by the Secretariat. Working Groups will be led or co-led NCCI members. The Board will require feedback from the members and the working groups in order to ensure efficacy.

**Suggested Development of Strategic Plan**

NCCI’s Strategic Plan will need to be prepared by the NCCI Secretariat, and approved by the Board within the next month using the recent workshop as the basis for the plan’s content. The Strategic Plan should include:

1. Executive Summary
2. Short Background of NCCI (including current structure)
3. Summary of the current environment (external)
4. NCCI analysis (internal strengths and weaknesses)
5. Confirmed purpose and goals (including mission)
6. Key events and actions that must occur in order to achieve mission
7. How the Strategic Plan will be operationalized (groupings and tasks, or logframe*)
8. Finance, communications, partnerships
9. How will monitoring, learning, and evaluation occur

The groupings and tasks, or logframe should include:

- Outcome
- Indicator
- Measure
- Responsibility
- Key dates
- Enablers (supporting resources)

*Example logframe attached as Annex One.*

**Key events:**

- Workshop report submitted to NCCI by 28 November 2014
- Strategic Plan finalised by 28 December 2014
- Strategic Plan implementation review by 28 February 2015
- Six month review by 28 June 2015

**Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning**

The NCCI Strategic Plan should be a document used by NCCI personnel to guide and direct their work. Individual work plans, budgets, and prioritization of tasks all occur based on direction given within the Strategic Plan. The current mission, and three objectives are clear enough to give good direction and flexible enough to enable adaptable work schedules depending on the operating environment in Iraq over the next three years.
Performance of NCCI, its Board, Secretariat, Work Groups, and individual personnel should all be measured against the Strategic Plan. This is a keystone document that should be regularly reviewed and progress monitored.

Within two months of the Plan’s approval by the Board, an implementation review should be conducted to ensure speedy and timely enactment is occurring. At six months, progress should be reviewed and a progress-report given to NCCI Board and members, as well as donors and other interested stakeholders.

The Plan should give all stakeholders direction and guidance and as such should drive learning activities. Areas where individual personnel, or groups of people (i.e. Board, or certain working groups) have identified training needs in order to achieve objectives, these should be included in the NCCI Training Plan for 2015. Similarly, learning should occur as a result of regular monitoring of progress. Monitoring should be an open and constructive process that is designed to encourage renewed focus on areas of opportunity, and to strengthen areas that are already achieving success.

Mid-term and final evaluations should occur in order to track progress, and to evaluate the overall success of the Plan. This is vital for individual and organisational learning, as well as to guide future actions and subsequent strategic plans.

**Recommendations**

- NCCI should ensure that a stakeholder engagement plan is developed as part of the Strategic Plan in pursuit of Strategic Objective two. The advocacy plan should be multidirectional including within the NGO community, and externally to UN agencies and offices, to donors, host and international governments, and the international community.
  - As part of the advocacy plan, the Advocacy Working Group should immediately draft a one to two page common talking points document for all NCCI members. This is an easily won achievement and will fuel further momentum. This document can also be the basis of a future document for HCT members.
  - NCCI should immediately identify, create, and support necessary working groups in addition to the already formed Advocacy, and Human Resources WG. Additional working groups may include Access, Government Engagement, and Funding.
  - NCCI should ensure that members are aware of NCCI’s financial position, including inclusion of financial statements in the Annual Report.
  - The NCCI Executive Coordinator Position Description should include high-level engagement duties with the Humanitarian Coordinator, senior host-Government Authorities, and donor representatives. The position description should also include a clear statement that the Executive Coordinator is a senior leader within the NGO community in Iraq and the position-holder is expected to take a leadership role, take assertive action on behalf of NGOs, and be able to mobilize relevant actors.
  - As part of the Strategic Plan, NCCI should review the breadth of its coordination activities across Iraq for relevance to the new Strategic Objectives in pursuit of its mission.
Continued from page 9

• A draft Strategic Plan should be presented to the Board for approval within one month. The Board should be actively engaged by the Secretariat throughout the development of the Strategic Plan.

• As part of the strategic planning process, and once the Strategic Plan has been endorsed by the Board, all NCCI activities, position descriptions, work plans, and budgets must be reviewed for relevance. This should be conducted within one month of the Strategic Plan’s endorsement.

• The Strategic Plan’s implementation should be reviewed within two months to ensure successful implementation and maintenance of momentum.

• A monitoring, evaluation, and learning framework should be established to support the Strategic Plan.

### Conclusion

As a result of the Strategic Planning Workshop, NCCI has a revised mission to give staff renewed focus to their work, and the affirmation and direction to able to develop a new Strategic Plan that offers a clear framework for the Secretariat, Board, and Members. There is a clear process for the Secretariat to follow in order to create a successful Strategic Plan. The process thus far has facilitated accountability of NCCI to the NGO community and its stakeholders.

Workshop participants are extremely positive about what they believe NCCI can achieve and appear committed to supporting NCCI in its mission and to ensure NCCI remains reflective of NGO requirements in Iraq.

The NGO community in Iraq is an extremely rich and diverse group and participants at the Strategic Planning Workshop very ably demonstrated their passion and commitment to NCCI and local communities in Iraq. This is a hugely exciting opportunity for NCCI to have an immensely positive impact on humanitarian and development action in Iraq through focused advocacy, leadership, and support to the NGO community.

### Workshop Participant Feedback

All participants rated the workshop and facilitation as either good or very good with the only question receiving a rating of fair being “Was the time allocated to each session appropriate?” It was evident during the workshop that more time was required for several of the topics. All participants said they would use this facilitator again.

**Comments from participants:**

“It was a pleasure partaking in the workshop--I definitely came away feeling like we'd made some solid progress and I hope we can work off of this momentum through the Advocacy Working Group. You are an excellent facilitator and did a great job teasing out some of the underlying leadership and coordination issues we are facing as NGO members.”

“I very much enjoyed the day and greatly appreciative of your flexibility and patience with some of my comments and different approach to doing some things; a sign of an excellent facilitator. Also, well done keeping the work focused and on track despite of the diversity of perspectives in the room.”

“You did an excellent job with the facilitating, bringing together what you rightly call a tremendously diverse and talented group is no easy thing, not to mention keeping everyone focused.”

“Covered a lot of ground and pullout a lot of ideas.”
**Mission**: NCCI is a member-led organisation that coordinates principled, collective NGO action in order to foster development, address humanitarian needs, and promote respect for human rights in Iraq.

| Objective 1: NCCI will act as the NGO focal point for internal and external actors. This includes sharing information and facilitating contact between stakeholders in Iraq. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Activity** | **Indicator** | **Measure** | **Responsibility** | **Key dates** | **Enablers** |
| Activity 1. NCCI will maintain an extensive network of humanitarian contacts and provide a platform for information sharing. | ... | | | | |
| Activity 2. NCCI will identify and create necessary working groups in order to ensure NCCI remains reflective of members needs, and to ensure member needs are addressed. | | | | | |
| Activity 3. ... | | | | | |

| Objective 2: NCCI is to create the enabling environment for NGOs to advocate for the rights and needs of people in Iraq. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Activity** | **Indicator** | **Measure** | **Responsibility** | **Key dates** | **Enablers** |
| Activity 1. Create advocacy working group. | ... | | | | |
| Activity 2. NCCI is to provide a clear, consistent, and coherent NGO voice on shared NGO priorities by developing a SMART advocacy strategy by mid-January. This strategy will be reviewed every six-months. | | | | | |
| Activity 3. ... | | | | | |

| Objective 3: NCCI is to provide services, advice, and capacity building to support NGOs in order to enable development, address humanitarian needs, and promote respect for human rights in Iraq. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Activity** | **Indicator** | **Measure** | **Responsibility** | **Key dates** | **Enablers** |
| Activity 1. NCCI will facilitate NGO coordination meetings at least monthly during humanitarian emergencies. | ... | | | | |
| Activity 2. NCCI will answer request for information on registration, visa and other administrative matters within 48 hours of receiving a request. | | | | | |
| Activity 3. ... | | | | | |
Workshop facilitator and report author: Dominic Bowen

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