

IHSA Governance Manual

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Useful links and references to documents mentioned in the manual

- IHSA Website - <https://ihsa.info/>
- IHSA Conference Website - <https://conference.ihsa.info/>
- IHSA Statutes - <https://ihsa.info/content/uploads/2018/09/IHSA-Statutes.pdf>
- IHSA Vision Paper - <https://ihsa.info/content/uploads/2018/09/Vision-Paper-2017.pdf>
- IHSA Annual Reports - <https://ihsa.info/about/governance/>

On Board Member Google Drive

- Minutes of previous board meetings
- Financial overviews
- Governance manual
- Policy brief on board member remuneration

1. Vision and mission

About

The International Humanitarian Studies Association (IHSA) is a network engaged with the study of humanitarian crises caused by disaster, conflict and/or political instability. Humanitarian studies is concerned with how humanitarian crises evolve, how they affect people, institutions, communities, and societies, and the responses they trigger.

IHSA forms a platform for the different disciplines that address humanitarian studies. It offers a venue where these scholarly communities can meet and debate their different insights and understanding of humanitarian crises, in dialogue with policy actors and implementing agencies. IHSA equally welcomes academic scholars, consultants, policy researchers, and reflective practitioners among its membership.

More information on our vision can be found in our vision paper, available on [our website](#).

Conference

One of IHSA's main activities is the International Conference on Humanitarian Studies. The first conference took place in the year IHSA was launched, in 2009, and it has been organised roughly every two years after that. The attendance varies from 250 to 500 participants. The conferences bring together a wide range of academics and practitioners who exchange knowledge on different topics.

The goal is to organize the conference at a different place in the world each time in collaboration with an academic partner who acts as co-host, for example a university or other academic institution. Usually, there are multiple academic and non-academic partners involved in the conference organisation, including national organisations.

Each conference has one main theme that is divided into 4 or 5 sub-themes. These are the sub-themes to which people can upload panel abstracts. The abstracts are reviewed by a scientific committee consisting of IHSA board members, reviewers from the local partners and other invited experts.

The IHSA conference has a separate website from the main website. www.conference.ihsa.info.

Purpose of the manual

The purpose of this manual is to provide Board members and others with the information necessary to enable them to carry out their duties in a manner appropriate to the values and needs of the International Humanitarian Studies Association and in compliance with applicable legal frameworks. It will be used as an induction tool for new Board members and a reference document for existing Board members. The manual draws on a range of sources including IHSA's Statutes and the various terms of reference for committees and Board roles.

Note: The Board of Governors will be referred to as 'the board' in the continuation of this document.

2. Governance

A summary of our current governance system can be found below. For more further information we would like to refer to our statutes. The statutes are publicly available for download from [our website](#).

Legal Framework

The International Humanitarian Association is registered as a foundation in the Hague, The Netherlands. Registered at the Dutch equivalent of Chamber of Commerce (the Kamer Van Koophandel) under the name Stichting International Humanitarian Studies Association, number 70739404. The postal address is located at the International Institute of Social Studies, Kortenaerkade 12; 2518AX in the Hague, the Netherlands.

Currently, the only person legally tied to the foundation and therefore solely responsible for legal follow up is the president of IHSA. Board members bear no legal responsibility linked to their board membership. Board members are protected from personal liability for debts or lawsuits against the association. Because of its non-profit status, IHSA is by law exempt from paying income tax.

Membership

IHSA offers two types of membership. Individual membership and institutional membership. We equally welcome academic scholars, consultants, policy researchers, and reflective practitioners among our membership. More information about our membership can be found on our website: <https://ihsa.info/membership/>

Anyone with an interest and background in humanitarian studies can become an individual member. Institutional members have to fill in an application via the website. Applications will be reviewed by the secretariat and at least one board member.

Membership fees

The individual membership fee is 25 Euros per year.

Yearly subscription fees for member institutions:

Institutional (small: <10 staff members) membership fees 100 euro

Institutional (large >10 staff members) membership fees 250 euro

General assembly

All IHSA members are part of the General Assembly (GA). They have the right to participate, directly or indirectly, in the decision making of IHSA.

These rights include:

- the right to vote in the election of officers
- the right to be elected as an officer/committee member
- the right to make proposals and/or suggestions regarding IHSA's policies and programmes •
- the right to comment on the work of the officers

The GA meets bi-annually at the IHSA conference. It decides upon the policy direction of the IHSA, rules and regulations concerning membership and activities, financial justification of annual expenditure and budget planning, and the composition of the executive bodies.

When a majority (two thirds) of the GA is present at a conference, decisions shall be made during the general assembly. When this is not the case, for example during a virtual or hybrid conference, an online voting system will need to be set up. When a GA member cannot attend the assembly it means they will

hand over responsibility for decision making to the present members. It shall take decisions by a majority vote of those present. In case a conference is held online, or when there is not a majority attendance at the GA, a virtual GA + voting option needs to be set up.

3. The Board

Composition of the board

The Board consists of 10 board members elected by the GA. Board members need to have an affiliation with IHSA and a background in working in the Humanitarian field.

Appointment of the board

The Board shall be elected by the General Assembly for a term of 4 years. IHSA aims to have a board that reflects the diversity of its membership, with special attention to representation of different genders, continents, and types of organization. The officers can be re-elected for follow-up terms. Members of the Board of Governors and the Executive Committee can be nominated prior to each bi-annual World Conference of Humanitarian Studies which occasion will include a GA.

Board members can be re-elected 3 times. It is recommended that no more than two-third of the board runs for re-election.

The President can be re-elected for a second term and is elected by the GA. If no candidate for President stands for election the board will appoint a President from the current board members.

Role of the board

The purpose of the board as a whole is to prepare policy for the GA's approval, to implement policies agreed upon, to conduct financial management and a funding strategy, and to oversee projects the IHSA engages in.

The executive committee

This committee consists of a president, a vice-president and a treasurer. The executive committee meets around 6 times per year.

With expanded activities and funding, the board will also be responsible for keeping financial records, preparing budgets and accounts and preparing an annual report (including a financial report). For this purpose, the board will elect a Vice-President and Treasurer.

The President

The IHSA President shall represent the IHSA both internally and externally and shall have general responsibility for the implementation of the IHSA's policy. S/he shall chair the meetings of the Board and the Executive Committee. The IHSA President shall hold office for a 4-year term. The President can be re-elected for a second term. In case of a vacancy for the post of President, the Board upon the recommendation of the Executive Committee shall appoint an Interim President until the end of the uncompleted term, should it consider it necessary to fill the office.

The Treasurer

The Treasurer is responsible for assisting the Board to provide effective governance in relation to financial strategy, management and reporting.

The Treasurer is expected to:

- Liaise with the secretariat, the executive committee and between Board meetings, in order to be informed about any changes in the financial situation of IHSA

- Ensure that the Board is informed of any significant events that may affect the financial viability of IHSA
 - Review and provide feedback on draft budgets and financial reports prior to Board meetings
 - Present the annual financial statements to the board and the members during the General Assembly
 - Oversee the IHSA's bank account, and the employees with access to the account. More information about roles surrounding financial delegation and usage permission can be found under finances •
- Ensuring the performance of external audits

The Vice-President

The Vice-president is responsible for assisting in daily Board management:

- Help formulate and implement relevant policies
- Propose/discuss changes in governance and is expected to act on urgent matters
- Approve internal minutes and prepare official minutes to be published on the website available for the public
- They will also be responsible for any tasks that are assigned to the President if the President is not available at the time, e.g., chairing board meetings and IHSA representation activities.

The Secretariat

The IHSA will be supported by a small secretariat. The Secretariat will administer the functioning of the IHSA.

The tasks of the Secretariat are to:

- Coordinating the organization of the conference, in collaboration with the local organizing committee
- Supporting study/working groups
- Developing and maintaining the website
- Maintaining contact with other organizations and members
- Providing the members with information (website, newsletter)
- Maintaining and expanding membership register and collect fees
- Contacting journals which may offer subscriptions at a reduced rate to IHSA members
- Liaising with institutional members about publicity (publications, training, jobs)
- Provide support surrounding finances – paying invoices, managing the budget
- Prepare the annual report and the annual finance statement for the Treasurer
- An agenda is prepared and shared by the Vice-President with room for input from the board on other topics

- Supporting the governance process
- Implement board decisions

Appointment of staff

The Executive Committee is responsible for hiring staff for the Secretariat and different projects. Some activities will be carried out by a part-time staff member and others by expertise hired for specific tasks. For long term commitment (more than 3 months) or an appointment higher than 2000 euros per year, approval from the board is needed.

Board members expectations and responsibilities

The board is responsible for general governance of the association. What is expected from board members?

- Attend 4 to 8 online meetings of 1.5 hours a year
- Provide insights, wisdom and judgment
- Help develop ideas for the vision and the strategic plan
- Determine policy and strategy
- Monitor performance
- Manage governance process
- Support the promotion of the activities of the association
- Ensure integrity of the general workings of the association by acting as out internal control system
- Active contribution to the development of IHSA as a professional studies association • Representing the association at international fora to increase the visibility and uptake of IHSA or promote membership of the association.
- Give approval and feedback on the Annual Report and the Financial Plan
- Be involved in the development of the conference themes

Board members have the following opportunities:

- Possibility to be a panel abstract reviewer at the bi-annual conference
 - The option to run for positions like, treasurer and vice-president of the association •
- Possibilities to start a working group or a committee on a specific topic
- Organize activities, such as webinars, on behalf of the IHSA

Board meetings

- An agenda is prepared and shared by the Vice-President with room for input from the board on other topics

- Minutes are taken by the IHSA Secretariat and approved by the Vice-President. They will be archived in the IHSA Google Drive accessible by all board members. Vice-President will prepare official minutes to be published on the website available for the public
- An action list is prepared so the Secretariat can follow up on progress
- Board members are expected to have read all readings that are attached to the agenda before the start of the meeting

Decision making

Over 50% of board members need to be present to open a meeting for a decision. IHSA strives to make board decisions by consensus, based on exchange of arguments around proposals. In case consensus cannot be reached, the board takes its decisions by voting. In order to vote the board must meet a quorum of two thirds of the board.

Resignation from the board

Members of the Executive Committee and the Board can resign by submitting a letter to the Vice President which will be transmitted to the GA.

Code of Conduct

Board members are expected to adhere to a code of conduct. It entails how we expect board members to treat one another with respect, cooperation and a willingness to deal openly on all matters. This includes proper use of authority and showing integrity when representing the board.

A register of potential conflicts of interest will be compiled by the secretariat and reviewed by the Executive Committee unless involving an Executive Committee member. In such a case an ad hoc committee of non-Executive Committee board members will be convened. If a conflict of interest cannot be resolved the board member may be required to resign.

- Board members must be loyal to the interests of the IHSA and avoid conflicts of interest • Board members cannot use their position on the board for direct personal or financial gain • A board member is expected to take an active stand in fulfilling the board's responsibilities and expectations (see above)
- Board members shall attend meetings on a regular basis. If a board member fails to attend the majority of the board meetings over a period of 12 months without approval of the board, their spot on the board can be up for removal
- Board members are expected to be familiar with the governing documents of IHSA. A board member is expected to uphold themselves and the rest of board to proper governance as stated in the statutes
- Individual board members or groups of board members who are interacting with the public, press or other entities, shall emphasize that they do not speak for the board unless specifically designated to do so by the board
- Board members shall not reveal confidential matters brought before the board, keeping in mind that any unauthorized statement could unfavorably affect the interests of IHSA or its members • Board members shall ensure that unethical activities not covered or specifically prohibited by the foregoing or any other legislation are neither encouraged nor condoned

4. Finances

Financial objective

IHSA is a non-profit, which means the objective is that our income will cover the minimum running costs of the association. All further income will be available to spend on activities related to the vision of IHSA. See website for our [vision paper](#).

IHSA costs and income

The IHSA income is mostly based mostly on membership and conference ticket sale income. In addition, the IHSA can receive donations and/or grants.

IHSA has a few minimum costs it needs to pay in order to keep running. These include website hosting, insurance, bank/accountant costs and email account costs. There is also a minimum amount of administrative hours needed by the secretariat to answer IHSA emails, update the website and organise the board member meetings. This total is estimated at about 3000 euros per year. This includes nothing else but basic running costs.

Board member remuneration

Members of the IHSA Board are volunteers and serve the association without remuneration.

- IHSA does not pay board members for any activity done for the association
- There are unique circumstances in which an exception can be made. This will always be discussed and approved by the board. For further information we refer to our policy brief on Board Member remuneration
- It is possible for non-board members, including members of working groups of the IHSA, to be paid for activities

Expenses policy for board members

When a board member needs to make costs related to an IHSA activity, they can apply to have their costs reimbursed to the Executive Committee

- Board members can only claim costs when the total of the claim has been approved by the executive committee before the costs were made
- The board members can claim costs up to a €1000 euros per term for goods and services like course material, conference attendance or travel expenses
- Board members are not excluded from buying a conference ticket to attend the biannual IHSA conference

Gifts

Occasionally board members or staff may receive a gift, benefit or an offer of hospitality arising from their position at IHSA. Any item considered exceeding €100 must be declared and recorded.

Subsidies for members and working groups

Both general members and working groups (excluding board members) can send in an application for subsidies for activities and events. Every application needs to have approval from the Executive Committee in order to be approved.

Responsibility and access to IHSA funds

The Treasurer is responsible for the IHSA bank account. They can delegate tasks surrounding financial

administration to employees in the Secretariat or members of the Executive Committee. The president of the association has access to the bank account as well.

Below an overview of persons with access to the bank account

Who	Amount	Approval Status
Secretariat	€500	Approval from Treasurer
	€500 and above	Approval by the Ex Comm
	€1000 and above	Approval from the board
Treasurer	€500	Approval from Treasurer
	€500 and above	Approval by the Ex Comm
	€1000 and above	Approval from the board
President	€500	Approval from Treasurer
	€500 and above	Approval by the Ex Comm
	€1000 and above	Approval from the board

A request for approval of payments to the treasurer and the Executive Committee can be done via email. An approval via the board needs to be done via a board meeting.

5. Committees and Working Groups

Ad hoc sub-committees may be created at the discretion of the Board upon recommendation of the Executive Committee, to make recommendations and act on particular matters.

Committee

A committee is a body of persons delegated to consider, investigate, act on, or report on some matters of concern to the Board. A committee membership can only consist of board members. The role of a committee is to assist the Board. Within IHSA there are two main committees at the moment. The Executive Committee and the Committee on Diversity and Outreach.

Committee on Diversity and Outreach

To assure one of our main values on inclusivity and diversity is met, a committee on Diversity and Outreach was formed in 2018. This group has three main objectives revolving around the themes of diversity and outreach. The first involves finding ways to diversify the composition of the IHSA board itself, to give voice to different perspectives in strategic planning for the association. The second is to support the diversification of the IHSA membership, in order to provide opportunities to a wide range of practitioners and academics engaged with humanitarian studies. And finally, the third objective is to develop innovative outreach activities to meet the first two objectives. As a general principle, diversity is not a goal in itself, but rather the creation of a vibrant and inclusive humanitarian studies community, one which is mutually supportive and sensitive to a wide range of voices.

Working Groups

Working groups are a group of people who investigate a particular problem and suggest ways of dealing with it. IHSA's working groups can be formed by any members of our association and need approval from the board to be established at the start. They are mostly self-governing entities and meet independently. Every working group needs to have the participation of at least one board member, to assure the values and mission of IHSA is always met and to have a representative who can report the workings of the group back to the board. The working groups are listed on the IHSA website.

Regional Chapters

As part of the inclusion and diversity values of IHSA, we have opened the possibility of forming regional IHSA chapters. Regional chapters are initiated by IHSA members in a particular region and aim to advance the objectives of IHSA in the region. Regional chapters must conform to the values and statutes of IHSA. Within these, regional chapters can shape their own organization and activities. Regional chapters, once approved by the board, can avail of resources of IHSA, including communication and financial support of activities, in the same way as working groups.