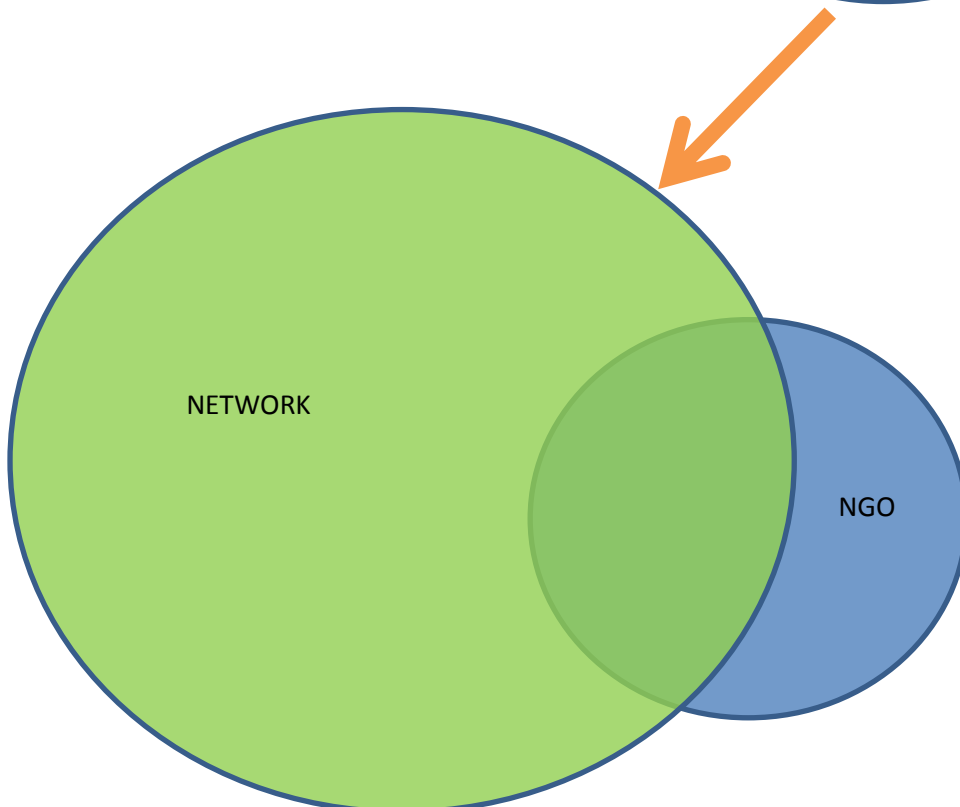
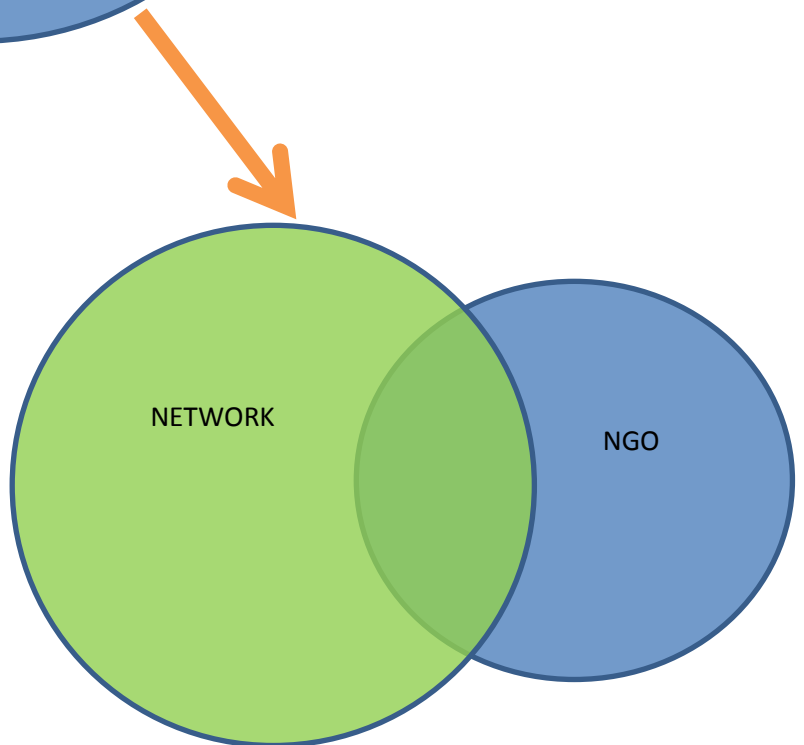


**Development of the
HelpAge International
Network to 2020**

**By
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July 2014**



DEVELOPMENT OF THE HELPAGE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK TO 2020

Yolanda Weldring and Martin Kelsey

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1. Executive Summary

This paper presents the findings and recommendations for the development of the HelpAge Network to 2020.

It is concluded that HelpAge International is too centralised and that the Network is not as influential as it should be in shaping HelpAge, its priorities or direction.

It is recommended that there is a fundamental shift of power and influence in favour of the Network Members.

It is proposed that the Network combines the characteristics of an open movement, along with decentralised structures in place to enable Network members exercise genuine influence over decision-making across HelpAge International. Specifically, it is recommended

- The label “**Affiliate**” be changed to **Member**. “Member” suggests a closer and more horizontal relationship, a more balanced relationship of power with an expectation of rights.
- The **formal core** of the Network become the **Members** of HelpAge, all with equal rights in terms of governance.
- **Members** will be civil society organisations with a commitment towards ageing in their programmes, working in **close** association with HelpAge International, paying an annual membership fee and with voting rights in both regional and global assemblies.
- **Those** Members who provide substantial funding support for HelpAge programmes outside their countries and regions represent a distinct group known as **Supporting Members**.
- The HelpAge Network could also comprise a wider informal group of **Partners**. This group may comprise any agency, organisation or institution with an association with HelpAge (including corporate partners), but not able or willing to become a full Member.
- We recommend four or five geographic regional **groupings** of the Members plus a separate grouping of the Supporting Members.
- Each regional grouping would meet annually at a **Regional Council**. The Regional Council would have oversight over the programme of HelpAge in the region and will approve regional strategies and annual work plans. Supporting Members will have their own Council. Each Council will elect at least one member to the Global Board.

- The **Global HelpAge International Board** could therefore comprise up to ten elected representatives drawn from the four regions and the Supporting Members. They would join individuals from outside the network to meet the overall skills requirements for the Board.
- The Regional Group of the network will be supported by the **Regional Secretariat Office**, led by the Regional Director. The Supporting Members will also have a team, structured similarly.
- The focus of the **Regional Director** would be towards Network development, with programme management led by a Deputy Regional Director.
- The network through both its **Regional Councils and a Global Assembly** would have oversight of HelpAge International strategy and direction.
- These are **significant and bold changes** which challenge the current organisational culture and business model. It would be important to ensure that change management support addresses not just structure and procedures, but also culture and attitude.

2. Why this Review?

As HelpAge International's CEO wrote in a letter to Board Members, Affiliates and Senior Staff: "A study is being undertaken by HelpAge International as part of the development of our HelpAge 2020 strategy. This study will look at the most effective way for the HelpAge network of Affiliates and other partners to help realise the changes that HelpAge wants to see for older people around the world in the coming years. The world is changing fast in so many ways and HelpAge needs to be sure that the combined capacities, resources and determination of HelpAge International and Affiliates are deployed in the future in ways that create optimal impact and value for money for older people around the world".

3. Methodology

Following the finalisation of a Terms of Reference for the study - see Annex (a); a Reference Group was appointed involving seven senior secretariat staff (based both in the field and the London secretariat office) with whom the two consultants had an initial orientation meeting and a follow-up meeting during the analysis stage. Information was obtained for the analysis through structured interviews with 8 HelpAge International Board Members, 12 senior staff members (one from each Regional Office, four Country Directors, one from the Brussels office and one from London Secretariat Office), 11 Southern Affiliates and 5 Northern Affiliates as well as reference to interviews undertaken during the 2012 review of the Latin America programme with 6 Southern Affiliates.

To examine the Network models of other organisations, telephone interviews took place with senior staff of CIVICUS, NCD Alliance, BirdLife International and Alzheimer's Disease International, with access to an analysis carried out in 2011 of Action Aid, Plan, Save the Children and IRC.

A review was undertaken of the last four HelpAge International Board meeting minutes on Network issues.

Over 20 key internal and external documents – see list in Annex (b) were made available to the consultants.

Finally, the consultants drew on their own senior professional experience with a range of INGOs such as Oxfam, Save the Children, BirdLife International, ACORD and HelpAge International.

4. Key Findings

In this section we summarize our key findings based on the 40 interviews with Board, Staff and Affiliates, Reference Group and CEO – see Annex (c), as well as relevant documentation.

a) Overall the Affiliates and Staff see **the HelpAge Network as a global movement supporting rights and services of older people and as an open structure of like-minded organisations, from the North and the South**. Although this is mentioned by the Board as well, there are also Board Members that see HelpAge International more as a UK-based INGO than as a Network because much – if not most – of their agenda is spent on issues that relate to the Secretariat and dynamics around it. The “Network” has been on the agenda of various Board Meetings, but not always with evident follow up on action points agreed to.

b) On the **achievements** of the HelpAge Network Board Members and Southern Affiliates emphasize **the success of the Age Demands Action (ADA) Campaign, launch of Global Age Watch Index (GAWI)**, which lead to increased visibility of ageing issues. Northern Affiliates mention consistently the successful work around the **Convention on the Rights of Older People**, with a lead role of the London Secretariat Office, as well as **emergency work** done by HelpAge International in collaboration with Affiliates. Staff agrees on this, adding also successes on programmes, like **mainstreaming of ageing in programmes** with Ministries of Health and Social Development, social protection, cash transfers and HIV-Aids programmes for older people, mostly referring to their own region.

Advocacy and campaigns activities were successful because of an active role of HelpAge staff together with Network members, mutual trust and collaboration in regions as well as well-developed tools by the London Secretariat Office staff.

HelpAge International’s emergency response capacity is also mentioned as a strength, especially in those cases where there is good collaboration between Country Offices and Affiliates/Partners, including Affiliates that support with fundraising.

c) **Less effective is the coordination among those Affiliates that provide funding support to HelpAge International and its programmes**; it was felt that HelpAge does not have a strategic view on how to work with the Network, has become centralised and both the Board and Supporting Affiliates feel this pulls back on further development of their roles.

d) Staff give examples where **frictions exist** in those countries where we have HelpAge International in competition with Affiliates for the same grants/projects. But also examples where Affiliates are too weak to play a strong role on influencing their governments, or even have serious internal governance issues, or no older people's rights in their mission and vision. It is felt strongly that those Affiliates should be de-affiliated. The Latin America lack of effective networking with strong other ageing Networks is given as an example how it should not be.

e) Although some Northern Affiliates are not happy with the name/brand of "HelpAge International....Age Helps" they all refer to their linkage of their international work to HelpAge International. **Southern Affiliates expressed unanimously that being able to be seen as part of an international network is very significant to them and make this as visible as possible.**

f) **On the issue whether Board, staff and Affiliates see an influencing role for the Network within HelpAge International, there is almost unanimous understanding that such influence is quite minimal at the global level.** The Board is not impressed with the level that the Network plays in decision-making within HelpAge International, despite there being Affiliates represented in the Board; it sees itself as more focused on HelpAge as an INGO than a Network. The Board considers itself under-utilized – in terms of the international experience and knowledge that it and the Network can give.

Neither do Staff see the Network having influence or playing a role at the global level, although individual Affiliates like HelpAge India do because of their historic influence. However Affiliates are not involved in budgets, Country Director/Regional Director appointments and it is also unclear how Affiliate Board Members are selected. **There is no General Assembly and no voting for Board Member structure; and no systematic structure for Board members to get input from other Affiliates on the continent. There is a preference that this would be in place.**

Interviewed staff are more positive about Network influence in the region or country. Some Country Directors mention that they are proactively seeking input from Affiliates in their country on strategies (like 2015-2020 draft) and annual plans, and also some Regional Directors mention that Affiliates in their region are asked for input on the most relevant strategies and policies.

Affiliates do not feel involved in HelpAge International decision-making, apart from around the development of individual proposals and projects. It appeared that there was little consultation or feedback from Board members to Affiliates, indeed there was some sentiment that the Board was *an elite that did not represent the Network*. There was variation between regions and countries with respect to the level of consultation and processes. Not all regions had regular network meetings **and the experiences of Affiliates in countries where there were Country Offices varied from the Affiliates feeling side-lined from decision-making to countries where the office does consult closely.**

g) Thinking about the challenges that limit the effective engagement of the Network in decision-making, there is reference by the Board to **the need to create clarity on where to involve the Network in and where not,** what is meant to just seek input or where decisions should be taken by a platform of Affiliates. Although there are

resource constraints, **HelpAge should develop communication mechanisms to involve the wider Network** much more, whether through new tools or otherwise. There are more positive comments on regional structures, although mostly from East Asia/Pacific. Should this not be structured elsewhere as well? Should this be for only information sharing as now happens, or more of a formal platform for consultation on policies and strategies?

According to majority of interviewed staff there is ambivalence in HelpAge International as to what the Network is. At times there is wrong perception of Network Members as service providers or subcontractors for HelpAge International.

The overall limiting challenge identified by the Northern Affiliates was, given the absence of a clear view of the role of the Network in decision-making, that there was ***no clear commitment at the HelpAge International HQ to serve as a Secretariat.***

Southern Affiliates felt that there may be capacity issues with some Network members, for example some may have very little experience in disaster response, but that there was a problem from the HelpAge International side as well. **Without a better strategic definition of the role of the Network, there is a risk that the relationship with HelpAge would be more vertical** and with some HelpAge International staff seeing Network members as merely recipients or sub-contractees.

h) There are examples of **tensions between activities** led by HelpAge International and the role of Network members, we got strong views. It was felt by some respondents that the organisation has been running on the old strategy plan for many years and that it is now time for change, where a focus should be on “what is best for older people in the world” rather than what is best for HelpAge International.

Staff gives more examples of tensions where HelpAge International decided to establish offices, like in South Asia (Bangladesh) and East Africa (Uganda, Kenya), although in other countries (Vietnam) the Country Office was welcomed by the Network because they received closer communication. HelpAge should be clear and transparent about what the added value of a presence would be. Examples like Haiti are given where Affiliates feel that they are not consulted on office location or choice of partner, and where there is competition on funds between Country Offices and Affiliates (Mozambique, South Africa, Central Asia, among others).

A major problem concerns the sustainability of the business model and the impression it gives to donors. Having two Regional Offices in Africa has been criticized by donors, as potentially are the two in Asia or even the “double” structure in the UK (Age UK/International).

Northern Affiliates saw sources of tension on poor communications from HelpAge International to them, as well as concerns about programme quality and the lack of capacity in some Country and Regional Offices. Although two of the **Southern Affiliates** expressed complete satisfaction, the majority were able to describe examples of where tensions had arisen. These included the establishment of Country Offices, without adequate consultation or protocols on the role of Affiliates versus new partners in future projects. Regional Offices also were described as bypassing Affiliates in-country in communication with government. Examples were given of where HelpAge International had claimed ownership of what were considered to be joint initiatives.

i) **Regarding alignment and a sense of shared identity** between HelpAge International and the Network there is in general a positive response (certainly from Eastern Europe and South East Asia), although still further development is required on creating clarity on expectations. Affiliates that only focus on older people align better with HelpAge International than those who have multiple target groups. There are examples where there are hardly any shared values, so why should HelpAge keep these organisations as Affiliates? The Sister organisations have much closer alignment. Overall there should be investment in Affiliates to build closer engagement where this is not in place, but there will probably always be a difference in the linkages with Affiliates like HelpAge India and Sri Lanka that are very close, compared to others with a much wider remit than only older people.

In Latin America the alignment with the Network has been weak and even very competitive, where HelpAge probably should have invested in bonding with other influential networks instead of focussing on its own thematic partners.

j) **The membership of the HelpAge Network seems not very clear to any of the groups** we interviewed and many refer that there is in fact little difference between Affiliates and other partners where we work with, the confusion on A, B and C type of countries, the distinction between fundraising Affiliates and the more implementing organisations. A majority of the interviewees think that the distinction between Partners and Affiliates is not very helpful in building a strong network. In Bangladesh and Vietnam the Country Offices work with many partners, of which only respectively three and two are Affiliates and it is difficult to explain what the difference is on the ground except for paying the annual fee and receiving the HelpAge bulletins.

Suggestions included whether HelpAge should not **invest in a smaller “core” group** instead of the 100+ Affiliates of varied size and quality, and to make a distinction between those who fund HelpAge International and those who receive funds.

k) **Bi-lateral contact between Members/ Affiliates of the network is mostly within regions.** There is only limited bi-lateral contact between Members in EWCA SA and LAC, whereas in other regions there is more independent contact among HelpAge Affiliates and Partners without intervention of the Regional Secretariat Offices and Country Offices.

There seems to be limited bilateral working among the Northern Affiliates, although the new European Network has facilitated linking with others. A challenge identified is that the Network is difficult to understand, so some have a preference of working through HelpAge International.

l) Overall there is the feeling that **roles and responsibilities** between HelpAge International and its Affiliates **are not clear**, or if they are that the expectations are not clear. The secretariat should focus more on capacity-building and the Regional Offices should have a stronger role in involving Members in the work of HelpAge International. Expectations of Affiliates should be clear, like whether Affiliates need to pay their fees (currently 50% is not doing it) and contribute with active participation and sharing of information. Mutual relationship and responsibilities are important as Affiliates benefit from being part of a prestigious network. There needs to be better selection criteria for Affiliates with more rigid criteria; only organisations with a strong commitment to ageing should be part of the HelpAge International network. Southern

Affiliates raised the issue of lack of overall consistency and exposure to different leadership and management styles.

m) Where there is a **clear appreciation** within HelpAge International and its wider Network for the work done on ADA, GAWI, Convention on the Rights of Older People and general awareness raising of needs and contribution of older people in programmes and the wider society, the frustrations on lack of internal communication and direction lead to recommendations specifically towards improving those aspects of the organisation:

- Clarify the role of the Network with a strategy, decision-making structure and clear roles of HelpAge International and its Members
- Need for a clear definition of roles and composition of the Board and Directors, as well as Regional Offices and Country Offices
- Better assessment of Affiliates to create a group of real committed Members
- Invest in Regional Meetings and web-based activities

5. Comparison with other Network Organisations and INGOs

We interviewed senior directors of CIVICUS, NCD Alliance, BirdLife International and Alzheimer's Disease International about their experience with running network organisations. We also included in our learning on structures the "INGO Structure Review of HelpAge International with OECD Affiliates", done by Siham Bortcosh (2011) where Action Aid, Plan International, Save the Children International and International Rescue Committee were compared with HelpAge International.

CIVICUS, NCD Alliance, BirdLife International and Alzheimer's Disease International are all organisations where network-building prevails over their INGO tasks and where the Secretariat has a clear function on advocacy, campaigning and capacity building, and either no role or very little role on managing programme implementation:

- **CIVICUS** has grants for advocacy programmes, run by Members (through open calls) or the Secretariat, but the main role of CIVICUS is their mandate to strengthen civil society worldwide and to bring organisations together with that focus. There is little compulsion on rules and regulations, and no joint branding. It is a Member-owned organisation with around 1000 members. There is one member, one vote, and every three years the General Assembly (which meets annually) select a new Board of Directors based on nominations from the Members. They see Johannesburg as their HQ base as a benefit. There is a fee system with 50-5000 US\$, dependent of size and budget of Members.
- The **NCD Alliance** has very little staff (two each in London, Geneva and New York) with support from Steering Group Chair organisation, which is currently the Union of International Cancer Control and was before the World Health Federation. There are 2000 CSOs related to NCD Alliance, spread over 170 countries, of which close to 1000 are Members. It is a loose network and there is no fee system, but it is a very active Network with a constant information

flow on global campaigns, show cases and web-based conferences. There are now close to 30 national and regional NCD Alliances, who started from bottom up and have their own advocacy objectives, for which tools are developed at the Secretariat, but no hierarchical lines how to implement.

- **BirdLife International** has 120 Partners (one per country) across the world with a Secretariat in the UK and six Regional Offices. The Partners run the partnership and its programmes, with the Secretariat supporting the Council, doing the international Policy & Advocacy work and filling the gaps. The Secretariat focuses on chasing and supporting Partners instead of stepping in directly. However a larger partner could step in to support in a country where there is insufficient capacity, but only when the national Partner agrees. The Council (Board of Trustees) is elected by the Partners, two from each region. Fees are paid based on 1 US\$/ paying Member for each Partner, which ranges from 50 US\$ to over 1M US\$/year.
- **Alzheimer's Disease International** is a federation of 84 Members, one per country except of few exceptions (UK/Scotland and China/Hong Kong/ Taiwan). The Members are the leading Alzheimer's Disease organisations in-country, representing patients and doing studies. It is a formal Federation with an Annual Council of all Members and each has one vote. There are also Regional Networks. There are fees and other obligations with also some challenge on having all Members compliant. Members are existing organisations and all work in country is done through these Members. Some twinning of Members exist, without large flows of money. The Board is elected by the Members and has a strong role on strategic planning.
- **Action Aid** has Members and is a Federation of self-governing organisations. There is one member/country and two levels of governance: national and international with no distinction between Northern and Southern Members. The Action Aid Members Assembly approves strategy, logo, resource allocation framework, new Members. The International Secretariat (based in Johannesburg) is a separate entity of the Association with focus on coordination, capacity-building, international advocacy & campaigning, communication. Multi-lateral donors are managed by the Secretariat but other fundraising done by Country Members under an overall framework.
- **Plan International** has 20 Members known as National Organisations, with most of them as fundraising entities in "rich" countries and voting weighted dependent on financial contribution. Most regional offices with their country offices are branches of Plan International and report to their HQ in the UK. This is not a relevant model to use for comparison with HelpAge International.
- **International Rescue Committee** does not have a Members' Assembly, the Board appoints its own Members and the UK Member reports to the US HQ. This is also not a relevant model to use for comparison with HelpAge International.
- **Save the Children International** is an Association of 25 Members which owns the SCI HQ in the UK. Members are largely entities around the world

that fundraise and campaign for causes under the agreed strategies. The Board of Directors is selected by the Members, which are mainly Northern Members; there is a weighted Board nomination structure, related to size of the organisations. The strength is the unification of international programmes at Country Office, Regional Office and HQ level, but the limited Southern representation and “power is money” philosophy does it not make a very relevant model in this HelpAge Network development trajectory.

What could we learn from these other organisations:

- CIVICUS, BirdLife International, Alzheimer’ Disease International and Action Aid International are Membership organisations with a good variety of Southern and Northern Members, a structure with an Assembly of Members that approve strategic plans, new Members, and other relevant business. They each have a Secretariat that mainly supports capacity building, support to national Members (in most cases one/country), global advocacy, campaigning and communication as well as technical advice on tools, guidelines, and the like. Where there is INGO type of programmes run out of the secretariat, they seem not to overtake the networking role of these organisations.
- NCD Alliance is the clearest networking organisation, with no programmes whatsoever, and as main goal to link organisations to each other for the sake of raising the attention for NCDs. Advocacy, campaigning and communication are the main drivers in the NCD Alliance. There is very little governance structure among Members and quite a loose Network with a culture of promoting the set up of independent country and regional NCD Alliances. Funding and power behind the NCD Alliance comes from a Steering Group (CEOs of six global organisations on specific health issues) and Supporters Consultation Group (Pharmaceuticals, NGOs and Foundations).
- Plan International, International Rescue Committee and Save the Children International are more traditional INGOs that grouped themselves in a certain way, but not real examples for the change that HelpAge International may wish to make.

6. Proposals and recommendations

We believe that HelpAge is defined by its Network, a movement which is working towards a world in which all older people can lead dignified, active, healthy and secure lives. Its distinctiveness lies in its global spread and its diversity. However we believe also that HelpAge International is too centralised and that the Network is not as influential as it should be in shaping HelpAge, its priorities or direction. However, a balance needs to be found between the innovation and dynamics of a much-treasured loose and open Network and structures needed to ensure that the Network is effective in influencing decision-making within HelpAge.

6.1 Role, function and form of the Network

The role of the HelpAge Network is both to support its Members to increase their individual effectiveness and also to bring Members together in joint action.

The Network is performing many functions, most importantly in its capacity to place issues on the global agenda, through advocacy and campaigns. The Network is also performing a convening role, taking ageing issues and developing dialogue with other stakeholders, for example looking at intergenerational policy and programming. It could also be doing more on knowledge management and mobilising resources.

It is proposed that **the Network combines the characteristics of an open movement, along with decentralised structures in place to enable Network members exercise genuine influence over decision-making across HelpAge International.**

Better clarity over the definition of Membership and its benefits will help in strengthening both the Network and its understood role.

We propose that the label “**Affiliate**” is changed to **Member**. The term “Affiliate” has a suggestion of power lying in the centre, with organisations joining to become “affiliated”, or associated with. “Member” suggests a closer and more horizontal relationship, a more balanced relationship of power with an expectation of rights. “Member” was the term used originally, so its return indicates as well a renewed commitment to the Network and its members.

The **formal core** of the Network will be the **Members** of HelpAge, all with equal rights in terms of governance:

Members: Civil society organisations (including NGOs and Older Peoples Associations), for whom ageing is either a significant focus of their activity or at least a committed area of programming for them, working in **close** association with HelpAge, paying an annual membership fee and with voting rights in both regional and global Assemblies, as well as other membership benefits and obligations, set out in a membership agreement. Potential Members might approach HelpAge International to join, or be invited to do so. Some Members may choose to share the same brand, through a licensing agreement with HelpAge, and become known as Sister Members.

Members who provide substantial funding support for HelpAge programmes outside their countries and regions represent a distinct group known as **Supporting Members**.

There has to be a formal vetting protocol, with agreed criteria and the involvement of governance bodies of the membership (these are described below). Membership should lapse immediately on non-payment of the fee or for breaches of membership criteria (which will need to be defined). There could be more than one Member per country, since we are recommending a Network which is diverse and vibrant, rather than centred on a brand. Members are therefore not expected to carry the HelpAge brand (unless they wish to do so and become Sisters), but their membership of the HelpAge Network is expected to be visible.

With the proposed change from the term Affiliate to Member and the setting-up of new Membership agreements, this will provide an opportunity to update the current Affiliates list to remove lapsed or inactive Affiliates or those whose programme focus has shifted from ageing. **In other words, this is a one-off chance to re-select Affiliates as Members, based on clear criteria.** This process of filtering will need to be taken with care and transparency, involving membership governance bodies as well as the Secretariat.

The Network will also comprise a wider informal group of **Partners** (this term is not to be associated with sub-contractees in projects). This group may comprise any agency, organisation or institution with an association with HelpAge. This may include project sub-contractees, Older Peoples Associations, research and policy bodies, private sector, government entities or indeed other INGOs. Partners do not pay fees, do not have voting rights. There will need to be a simple registration process to develop a Partners' database, which will be managed at the regional level.

Benefits of membership

- **Voting rights:** At regional level Members will vote on Board nominations, approval of regional strategies and annual plans.
- **Consultation:** At country level, the Regional Secretariat Office (or Country Office if it exists) of HelpAge International will consult with Members in-country on any planned activities. Where possible, such activities will involve the Members. However, it is recognised that under certain circumstances (for example major humanitarian responses), direct engagement of Members may not be possible and other project Partners may be necessary, but the in-country Member must have been consulted and been able to provide some feedback.
- **Development of strategies and policies:** Members will have the opportunity to participate in working groups or clusters at regional or global level to shape the development of strategies, plans and policies.
- **Capacity-building:** Members will be able to request support from the Regional Secretariat Office to build their internal capacity through the provision of materials, fundraising support, technical advice and, resources permitting, training support.
- **Information and communication:** Internet discussion forums will be set up globally and regionally, with access only to paid-up Members and staff. Partners could enter on payment of a subscription.

6.2 Governance and accountability

We propose a fundamental shift of power and influence in favour of the Network Members. We believe that this would create a much more dynamic environment for HelpAge International to bring relevant players on ageing together, at national, regional as well as global levels. HelpAge International would be accountable to its elected Board globally and to the Regional Council on the work that it does, either

directly or in collaboration with others. We would also expect to see that with strategies and plans agreed across the Network, Members would identify those parts of their own programmes which are contributing towards the agreed HelpAge strategic objectives and report on these to the wider Network.

We propose that **there will be four or five geographic regional groupings of the Members, plus the grouping of the Supporting Members.**

Each regional grouping will meet annually at a **Regional Council**. Only paid-up Members will be eligible to attend this meeting (it will be a closed session of the Annual Regional Network Conference, which is open for the wider Network - see below). As part of its business, the Regional Council will biennially elect a regional representative for the HelpAge Board. Each region will have one or two representatives.

Currently Affiliates can nominate members of their Boards and other individuals to the HelpAge International Board, but not their own staff, it is recommended that this is continued.

We suggest that CEOs as well as Board members of Member organisations could be represented on the Regional Council or the Supporting Member Council. However, those elected to serve on the Global Board and have line-management responsibility over Regional Directors cannot be CEOs of Members.

The Regional Council has oversight over the overall programme of HelpAge in the region: implementing programmes, campaigns as well as network activities, and those programmes of members which are contributing towards the agreed strategic objectives. This means the review of reports which show progress towards agreed targets, and approval of regional strategies and annual work plans developed by the Regional Secretariat.

The wider Regional Network Annual Conference will be a forum for debate on policy, best practice exchange and information-sharing.

The **Supporting Members Group** will also meet on an annual basis to develop plans and coordination on fundraising and programme design, agreement on priorities and resource-sharing and biennially elect one of its two Global Board members.

The **Global HelpAge International Board** could therefore comprise up to ten elected representatives drawn from the four regions and the Supporting Members. The Board itself will also be able to elect up to four individuals from outside the Network to meet skills requirements for the Board.

The Global Board will meet once or twice a year, and will continue to depend upon a smaller Executive Committee (made up of the Chair and Treasurer of the Board, plus one or two Regional Representatives). The ExCo will remain responsible for closer business oversight and support to the global HelpAge International Secretariat, with the wider Board focusing on more strategic oversight.

The Global Board will have oversight over the functioning of the Regional Councils with the power to step in under circumstances of dysfunction.

The Global Assembly will take place every four to five years with roles including substantial input into the five-year global strategy and global policies.

The elected Board members from a region will have **a duty to report back to their respective Regional Councils** on Board decisions. Regional Council meetings will take place annually prior to the Global Board meeting which sets the priorities for the year ahead.

6.3 Role of Secretariat and Regions

We found that overall that HelpAge International has a strong focus on INGO type roles, with Networking responsibilities seeming more of an “add-on”. We propose that this should change dramatically to bring the Network much more to the forefront than currently is the case.

The Secretariat of HelpAge International will comprise London, Regional and, where they exist, Country Offices. The overall functions of the Secretariat will include the following:

- **Support to governance:** preparation and coordination of Global Board and Regional Council meetings and ensuring that follow-up actions take place.
- **Strategy, planning and reporting:** leadership in the design and development of global and regional strategies, annual planning, priority-setting and preparation of annual regional and global reports.
- **Support to Network:** technical support to network members (including programmatic as well as organisational development support), coordination and administration of regional and global Network activities (identification of new Members, maintenance of databases), facilitating linkages, collaboration and, where necessary, arbitration.
- **International Programming:** development and implementation of global and regional policy work, research and advocacy, as well as management of secretariat-led projects (which may be global, regional or country-based).
- **Resource mobilisation:** fundraising from international sources and support to fundraising initiatives led by Members, in terms of technical advice, communication materials and programming information.
- **Communications and outreach:** a representational role regionally and globally of HelpAge International, development of communications materials and media, knowledge management, global and regional debates and forums on relevant themes.
- **Operational support:** management and provision of internal operational and support needs such as grant management, human resources and finance.

Regional Secretariat Offices will prioritise Network development in their region. There are examples in HelpAge of Regional Secretariat Offices that already play that role quite well – for example East Asia/Pacific and Southern Africa. They will act as

the Network's Regional Secretariat, ensuring that there is timely and fluid communications across the Network, high quality preparation for Council meetings and the Regional Assembly, processing and vetting membership applications, and administering membership fee collection. The Regional Secretariat Office will develop regional policy and advocacy initiatives and be responsible for support to Network Members on programme activities that are funded through HelpAge International, as well direct management of Country Offices (where they exist) and regional programming. Work on advocacy, campaigning, communication and policy development will be highly externally orientated towards work with both Members and the wider Network.

The main role of the Regional Director will be to work with a strengthened Network to bring the policy agenda of HelpAge to the forefront of political and public attention.

We believe that the Regional Director needs an enlarged Regional Secretariat Office to support Network development. On the assumption of being budget neutral, it is proposed therefore that the number of Regional Secretariat Offices is reduced from 6 to 4 in the new 2015 – 2020 Strategy.

Besides strengthening the Network in each region, HelpAge International will continue to have some **directly managed Country Programmes**. These activities, as well as regional programming will continue to require support, especially regarding grant management and compliance. It is proposed that a Deputy Regional Director will become responsible for the management of HelpAge's Country Programmes and provide the line-management of Country Directors in that region; along with those programme managers responsible for regional work, as well as support services and emergencies. **Overall this means that the Regional Director is more the "Network" and "External" focused and the Deputy Regional Director more the "Country Offices" and "Internal Regional Secretariat Office" focused.** However, it is important to stress that Country Directors too will be expected to prioritise network capacity-building in their programmes.

The **Regional Director** will report to one of the Global Board members elected from that region with dotted line management to the HelpAge International London Secretariat Office. Their respective line-management roles will need careful definition.

The **Deputy Regional Director** reports to the Regional Director, but has a dotted line also to HelpAge London Secretariat Office, and is involved in financial, staff contract and grant management, key performance indicators, etc.

The Regional Secretariat Office will relate to its Members and Country Offices in a comparable way: creating facilities for regular communication, technical support on advocacy, campaigning, policy development (thematic areas) and fundraising, as well as organisational development (on Governance, Finance, HR). This breaks significantly from the current focus of many of the Regional Secretariat Offices as well as the Programme Department where systems and support go primarily to HelpAge International Country Offices.

Regional Secretariat Office staff do not have to be based in one location, indeed being hosted by Members or HelpAge International Country Office will help to

spread advocacy, policy and networking staff over more locations. This would create a more dynamic way in which staff link widely within the region, provides the basis for a more multinational workforce, focused on high skills and working at strategic locations, such as being close to regional bodies.

A similar platform is also proposed for the Supporting Members (currently Age UK International, HelpAge Germany, HelpAge USA, Age Action Ireland, HelpAge Spain, World Granny, HelpAge Korea). This group will also have a team that relates to them and ensures good communication flow on programme outcomes, policy and advocacy materials. The Secretariat could host a manager who is responsible for relationships with this group, with a reporting line to a lead among the Supporting Members Group, and a dotted-line to the secretariat of HelpAge International. **But other supporting technical staff could sit anywhere and preferably also in some other locations than London where relevant bodies are based:** HelpAge USA (New York for UN; Washington for USAID), Brussels (EU/ECHO) and Geneva (UN Humanitarian).

6.4 The dual mandate Network - INGO

With the proposal to bring all the INGO related activities under the four Deputy Regional Directors with a dotted line to the London Secretariat Office, this creates a break with the current pattern where Regional Directors are primarily focused on the INGO business: development of proposals and reports to bi-lateral, multi-lateral donors, as well as funding Affiliated Members; spending on agreed annual objectives/aims and reporting against those; compliance with HelpAge' internal procedures.

There are Country Offices and Regional Secretariat Offices that are able to play their Network role quite well. In the annexes d(i) and d(ii) are descriptions of successes in Vietnam and Ethiopia, where developing the wider Network on ageing with Affiliates and Partners is seen as a key role of the HelpAge Country Office and by the HelpAge Country Director. We could add Country Programmes like Pakistan and Tanzania to this list, but there are certainly also Country Programmes where focus on the programmes managed directly by the HelpAge Country Office is so high that the INGO role is weakening the Network role.

There are Regional Programmes with major programmes focused on capacity building of civil society and OPAs, advocacy and campaigning for the wellbeing of older people in that region, networking among organisations that play a role on ageing, and the like. Examples of these are the EC grant for the European Affiliates, led by the Brussels Office, the development of national Network structures in the Southern Africa region, strong emphasis on capacity building and networking in the East Asia and Pacific region (in both regions supported by an EC grant), and work on HIV/AIDS, focussing on older people in five African countries, led by the East, West and Central African programme. HelpAge should pursue such capacity-building and advocacy grants further as it shows the success of those Country Programmes and Regional Offices where networking among organisations with a focus on older people and ageing is high on the agenda, as well as capacity building and strengthening of local CBOs, OPAs, faith-based organisations and the like. In most HelpAge regions those Country Programmes that have a clear direction on Network

development and capacity building activities, seem also to be the most successful in securing grants from donors on those aspects of their work.

To perform a capacity building and mainstreaming role substantially requires a team of technical experts in each of the Regional Secretariat Offices, which due to increasing requirements from HelpAge INGO tasks, have been diminished over the years. Furthermore, with the opportunity of an increasingly role being taken by Age International for UK-focused international fundraising and policy work, the **HelpAge International Secretariat can develop its attention to the Network further.**

6.5 Working in Consortia

HelpAge International and their current Affiliates and Partners can be more influential on the global, regional and country arenas in asking attention for older people's rights and raising the profile of organisations that work with and for older people (like OPAs, NGOs). For a medium-size organisation as HelpAge International, it is very hard to compete with the technical expertise of large INGOs on a variety of competences. We recommend that HelpAge International search more systematically for INGO partners with a wide reach on number of people included in their country programmes and explore their interest in building a partnership with HelpAge to develop their capacity on ageing and to include such expertise (coming from HelpAge International and its Members) into their programmes. Mainstreaming ageing would have a dual benefit: reaching more older people where they otherwise would not be reached, and building capacity of larger (I)NGOs in addressing issues for older people. Equally this represents capacity-building and learning opportunities for HelpAge (both for the Secretariat and Members).

6.6 Cultural change

Cultural and attitudinal change are among the most difficult parts in organisational change processes. Changing organograms and reporting lines is relatively simple and even complex processes can be completed within a fixed time-frame. That is however different for cultural changes. When an organisation has developed over the years to a more centrally steered organisation, it will not be easy to "trust" delegation to Regional Councils. When some "Affiliates" have not met their contractual obligations with HelpAge International, it will not be easy for them if they become new "Members" to relate differently to HelpAge International. The organisation should think how to support this change process, not only technically, but also culturally.

7. Concluding statement

We propose that there should be a commitment made to a direction of travel over the period to 2020 to reaffirm that HelpAge is a Network-based organisation, with the concomitant changes in governance structures to give Network Members a real stake in the organisation. We believe that this will strengthen the HelpAge movement and mobilise more resources to increase impact nationally, regionally and globally.

In conclusion, we present what might be an alternative scenario for not moving in this direction and then we examine the opportunities and challenges that our proposal represents. Whilst there are risks in whichever direction of travel is chosen for the future, we consider that the adherence to a centralised INGO model presents a greater long-term threat to HelpAge's impact and sustainability.

7.1 Alternative scenario

What if HelpAge International would not choose to move in the direction of becoming a stronger international Network; could it not develop itself to a stronger INGO without involvement of the wider Network in its governance structure?

HelpAge International is a medium size INGO with an annual budget of 28M GBP, of which 6M is coming from Age UK International which is the largest part of HelpAge International's flexible income, besides the PPA from DFID. The rest is mostly restricted income, either from bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors to HelpAge International or raised by one of the Supporting Affiliates.

Whilst there was a growth scenario envisioned in the planning period 2010-2015, this would not be realistic as a projection if HelpAge International was going to primarily focus on its INGO role with implementation of programmes in countries and regions. Some large INGOs are experiencing such growth, but this is generally not the case with medium-sized INGOs. Bi-lateral donors in particular increasingly want to see evidence of impact reached by the programmes they are funding. This requires very sound monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning systems, starting with good baselines and monitoring systems. For medium-sized organisations it is difficult to compete with the resources that larger INGOs are able to invest in this. HelpAge International could choose to reduce the number of Country Programmes directly managed from 17 or 18 to half of those, to be able to put more resources into those countries. But this would reduce HelpAge International's global footprint substantially, and not necessarily lead to a stronger investment in technical capacity for Members and Partner organisations.

Fundraising is an increasing challenge for all development INGOs and having a strong niche is required. Small scale programmes in a Country are less interesting for donors, as we see from the rationales they give for not granting bids to HelpAge. Although we have not made an analysis of recent successes and failures in fundraising by HelpAge International, it seems that the organisation is increasingly successful where they are able to show good work on Network building, like in Southern Africa, East Asia, Europe and Central Asia. Elsewhere in Africa there are examples of HIV/Aids, Health and Social Protection related work – also with a good components on capacity building of local organisations and advocacy towards (local) governments – and in Asia on developing OPAs and strengthening capacity of organisations on older people's rights.

From our view development of HelpAge International's Network is the only viable option to become an increasingly major player on ageing in countries, regions and worldwide, and would this not be possible in the same extent if the organisation would focus primarily on its INGO role. This does not mean that tools for good programme management and performance become less relevant, but they should

increasingly be developed for the HelpAge Network instead of primarily for its own programmes.

7.2 Advantages and challenges of moving towards a network-based organisation

We believe that the direction taken towards a more network-based organisation giving Network Members a greater voice and an increased stake in the organisation, supported by formal governance structures and mechanisms, will have:

a) Significant benefits

- **Legitimacy:** HelpAge was founded on the concept of being a networking organisation and these proposals reaffirm these principles and create the framework for bringing the voice and influence of Network Members into the shape and direction of the organisation. This will strengthen the organisation's mandate and, we believe, increase HelpAge's influence, stature and leverage.
- **Participation:** This approach will enhance the opportunities of participation of older people and Older Peoples Associations in the organisation, partly through their involvement and influence in some (not necessarily all) of the Members, but also through an evolving organisational culture with HelpAge International where relationships will become more horizontal and consultative.
- **Resource Mobilisation:** We believe that once Members feel that they have a greater say and a great stake in the development of HelpAge International, their commitment towards contributing towards agreed strategic goals will increase.
- **Timing:** The development of the new 2020 Strategy provides an optimal moment for reshaping the governance and structures. This can align the organisation's profile and approach, we believe, with the directions being shown by wider development practise.

b) Challenges

- **Costs:** Support to new governance structures may be demanding in terms of resources. Financially there will be the requirements for the Network meetings, as well as capacity-building support. Some staff time at the Secretariat will be dedicated to servicing the Network's needs. Some of this staff resource may be available once certain functions currently undertaken centrally are taken on by Members, e.g. in the UK. Merger of Regional Offices is necessary to have the resources for strong Regional Secretariat Offices with good technical capacity to support the Network.
- **Slower decision-making:** There is a concern that governance structures and accountability may add time to decision-making processes, by being unduly bureaucratic. Whilst formal structures and protocols are needed to ensure genuine governance procedures happen ("the democratic framework"), the formal role of the Network will be their participation in shaping strategic frameworks and overall direction. Day to day decision-making will still be held

by the Secretariat (both London and Regional offices), as will follow-up on activities that lie within the agreed strategic framework.

- **Management of both a “secretariat” role and an “INGO” role:** There is concern that a single management body will find it difficult to embrace both secretariat-type functions with those of an INGO. The evidence from other networking organisations shows that this is possible and indeed, HelpAge International already combines these roles, albeit arguably with main emphasis on the INGO function. We believe that many of the areas of the secretariat role are enhanced by have the INGO capacity alongside (e.g. technical and operational support to partners).

8. List of Annexes

- a) ToR for this assignment
- b) Summaries of interviews
- c) List of reports and documents reviewed
- d) Brief case studies for (i) Vietnam and (ii) Ethiopia