

Terms of Reference (ToR): Peer Network review to inform and guide the development of HelpAge Network Strategy

1. About HelpAge

HelpAge International is a registered charity in the UK, leading an international network focused on ageing issues and supporting older people globally. HelpAge works with 199 partners in 95 countries to help older people claim their rights and challenge discrimination and poverty, so that they can lead dignified, secure, active and healthy lives. HelpAge operates through a Global Team with staff based across the world. Through this structure HelpAge delivers its Strategy 2030.

2. Background of the assignment

The 2030 HelpAge Strategy sets out how we as an organization are committed to localising and focusing our efforts on working with, through and for our Network Members, putting them at the heart of strategy delivery and at the forefront of our ambition to build a movement for change. To advance this ambition a draft network strategy has been developed. It outlines five objectives and sets out clear milestones between now and 2030. This has been consulted on with the network and the overall framework has been approved by the board but the final strategy will be developed in June for approval by the board in July. A network strategy task team has been developed to finalize the network strategy and develop an operational plan.

Among the further inputs we have identified to strengthen our network strategy deliberations we are seeking an externally focused consultation with peer networks to help us identify good practices, lessons learned and innovations pursued to deepen our understanding including:

1. ways of working
2. systems and capabilities needed for effective collaboration
3. communication mechanisms
4. business model options and lessons learned

3. Objectives

The objective of this consultancy is to conduct an external consultation of peer networks to inform and guide the network strategy task team as they finalize the strategy and develop the operational plan. It will share lessons learned and good practices from elsewhere, as well as identifying points of contact for future information sharing and peer support.

4. Scope of Work

This TOR outlines the specifics of an 8 day consultancy to be completed by end of June (date to be finalized after discussion). It will deliver a 15-20 page report with annexes or suggested further reading as relevant. The report should include:

- Comparative analysis table
- Short case studies/examples
- Key insights grouped by theme.
- Practical implications for HelpAge strategy development
- Recommendations for various areas of HelpAge's operational plan

The consultant will align findings with five strategic objectives of the draft HelpAge Network Strategy and consider these areas:

- a. Network growth and development plans and strategies including membership recruitment, criteria for approval, onboarding of new members and addressing the issue of inactive members
- b. Any segmentation or prioritisation categories or strategies they have for differentiated offers (e.g. Due diligence levels for programming partnerships, member preferences/interest, thematic alignment/expertise)
- c. How they define the offer to members e.g. value of membership, including what members can expect from the secretariat and from each other
- d. Any strategies they use to ensure equitable leadership and reflect diversity of their membership in decision making?
- e. Any strategies they have for linking with others (e.g. ambassadors, board members, academics or others to grow or strengthen the network, increase visibility, and contribute to fundraising.)
- f. What their funding and resourcing model is, particularly in support of long term implementation and network sustainability
- g. What their operational plan covers and how it is implemented

Selection of peer networks

The number and type of peer networks to include can be proposed by the consultant and decided with the HelpAge team. Criteria could include some of the below factors:

- Focused on delivering impact at national and grassroots levels through advocacy and programmes
- Funding focused:
 - Networks that channel funding through members or partners (e.g., via sub-grants or pooled funds)
 - Experience managing onward granting, fiscal sponsorship, or shared resourcing.
 - Networks that support national or community-level implementation with flexible core or catalytic grants

- Established network-led structures with member-driven governance mechanisms or experience shifting power to network and national and grassroots members
- Known for peer learning, knowledge exchange and co-creation of tools
- MEAL that measures network health and collective impact rather than just organisational results

Preferable

- Any that have intentional models for including marginalized voices (e.g., feminist, disability-inclusive, youth-led, Indigenous networks)
- Strong practices on language inclusion, digital accessibility, or shared leadership with underrepresented members
- A mix of mature, emerging, and transitioning networks to offer diverse learning.
- Inclusion of networks based in or rooted in the Global South

Example Networks (to select from and consider along with others)

- CIVICUS
- ActionAid
- Global Fund for Women (for participatory funding models)
- Girls Not Brides
- WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment)
- Frontline AIDS
- Start Network (decentralized humanitarian response)
- NEAR Network (Southern-led network for humanitarian localization)
- Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People (GAROP)
- Hivos' Voices for Just Climate Action
- PaRD (Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development)

The review should explore the issues below:

Structure and Ways of Working

- What ways of working have encouraged members to engage constructively and consistently with the network and facilitated a sense of collective ownership and responsibility?

- What systems, skills and communication mechanisms within the secretariat function have been set up to balance guidance and leadership without undermining collective ownership and proactivity?
- How are secretariat teams structured and resourced to support the network effectively (e.g., staffing models, regional presence, decentralisation)?
- What core capacities—technical, relational, and leadership—are essential within secretariats to build trust, coordinate action, and support members?

Segmentation and Differentiated engagement.

- Within larger networks what segmentation / differentiation of approach has informed the terms of engagement to reflect the varied capacities, interests and commitments of different and diverse members?
- What strategies have been pursued to balance network member growth and expansion in keeping with an ambition to realize a movement for change, with the quality of network member engagement and the prioritization of key deliverables?

Technology

- What technological platforms and tools have been effective in enabling meaningful participation, knowledge exchange/ coordinated action, particularly across geographies and varying digital access levels?
- How do networks ensure accessibility and inclusivity in digital engagement, especially for members with limited technical capacity?

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

- What lessons have been learned among peer networks to realize a culture and way of working that facilitates documentation of member experience, evidence building and sharing of learning to sufficiently inform regional and global advocacy?
- What MEL systems and practices are in place to assess the network's collective impact and value to its members?
- How is learning captured and used to inform strategic decisions and adapt approaches over time?
- What measurement indicators both qualitative and quantitative have been established to evidence successful development of a network and how have these been monitored and utilized to inform future direction and lesson sharing?

Resourcing Model

- What resourcing models have networks adopted to ensure long-term sustainability (e.g., member contributions, pooled funding, shared staffing, in-kind support)?
- How are responsibilities for resource mobilisation distributed among members and the secretariat?
- What lessons have been learned about balancing financial independence with shared ownership and network solidarity?
- What business opportunities have been pursued and what lessons have been learned around successful fund raising for network support and development that has allowed the collective ambitions of the network to advance rather than the individual interests of a specific member.

Governance

- What mechanisms have networks put in place to facilitate members to inform the governance, decision making and prioritizations of the secretariat and what lessons / good practices have been derived on the back of this experience.

5. Timeline

A final report should be delivered by the end of June (final date to be agreed) with weekly meetings prior to this to review update on progress, challenges and matters arising as well as to ensure that the task team considerations are regularly informed by this consultancy.

6. Contract management

Management to be overseen by Chris McIvor, with regular sharing of content and deliberations with the Task Group co-lead (Caitlin) at selected stages before the final draft.

7. Consultant Profile

- Experience of working on network strategy and development and engagement with similar issues as those outlined in the scope of work above.
- Past experience of developing strategic papers as well as informing operational plans to translate strategies into practice.

- Ability to constructively challenge and interrogate organizational thinking on the issues outlined in the scope of work and to assume the role of 'critical friend' as the final paper is developed.
- Past experience of similar consultancies would be desirable.

Safeguarding

Everyone has a role in creating and sustaining a safe and respectful working environment, where no one comes to any harm or is maltreated. At HelpAge we take our responsibilities very seriously and will take action against wrongdoing. We will do everything we can to ensure that we do not engage people that pose a safeguarding risk and will undertake criminal record checks as required.

Diversity & Inclusion

HelpAge International is dedicated to creating a diverse and inclusive environment for all its employees/consultants while extending the culture of inclusion into our work.

We believe that our workforce should reflect the wide diversity of the communities we serve, and that diverse voices should be elevated and intentionally integrated into our work. We embrace difference and diversity of identity, experience, and thought, and actively strive for inclusive behaviours across our organization and work regardless of gender, race, disability, age, nationality, ethnic/national origin, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, marital status, pregnancy, social status, and political beliefs.

How to Apply

Interested and experienced consultants are invited to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) that include:

- **A technical proposal** (maximum 3 pages) including: brief explanation about the consultant/s with emphasis on previous experience in this kind of work; profile of the consultant to be involved in undertaking the consultancy, key contacts/samples from similar work carried out.
- **A financial proposal:** The financial proposal should provide cost estimates for services rendered for an 8 days' consultancy, including professional and any other costs to carry out the assignment.

to jobs@helpage.org by the closing date with the email subject: **Consultancy: Peer Network Review**