

HelpAge International

Renewal Audit – Summary Report – 2023/06/09

1. General information

1.1 Organisation

Type	Mandates	Verified
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> International <input type="checkbox"/> National <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Membership/Network <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Direct Assistance <input type="checkbox"/> Federated <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> With partners	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Humanitarian <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advocacy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Humanitarian <input type="checkbox"/> Development <input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy
Legal registration	INGO	
Head Office location	London, United Kingdom	
Total number of organisation staff	450	

1.2 Audit team

Lead auditor	Jordi Capdevila
Second auditor	Efehi Ubebe
Third auditor	
Observer	
Expert	
Witness / other participants	

1.3 Scope of the audit

CHS Verification Scheme	Independent verification
Audit cycle	Second Cycle
Coverage of the audit	<p>The scope of the audit covers HelpAge International's (HelpAge) humanitarian mandate. HelpAge conducts direct implementation of projects through Country Offices (COs) and through partners, including HelpAge network members and partners outside its international network. The audit scope only covers the activities undertaken by HelpAge Head Office (HO) and its COs, and while it also reviews how the organisation works with partners, the results of the verification audit do not extend to HelpAge's network members, which for the purpose of this audit, are considered as implementing partners.</p>

1.4 Sampling*

Total number of Country Programme sites in scope			14
Total number of sites for onsite visit			1
Total number of sites for remote assessment			3
Name of country programme site	Included in final sample (Y/N)	Rationale for sampling and selection / de-selection decision	Onsite or Remote
Random sampling			

Colombia	Y	Selected to ensure geographical coverage as well as diversity of implementation modalities (partner implementation).	Remote
Venezuela	N	Not selected, to extend geographical coverage.	
Malawi	N	Not selected as it was already included in the Initial Audit.	
Moldova	N	Not selected due to operational constraints as a consequence of the war in Ukraine.	
Purposive sampling			
Bangladesh		Selected to ensure geographical coverage and diversity of funding mechanisms (DEC-Disasters Emergency Committee and non-DEC funded projects).	Onsite
Syria		Selected to ensure geographical coverage. In addition, the programme has recently ended, so it provides diversity regarding the maturity of the programme portfolio, as well as diversity of funding mechanisms (DEC and non-DEC funded projects). It also ensures sampling of partner led implementation.	Remote
Tanzania		Selected to ensure geographical coverage. Diversity of implementation modalities, with direct and partner implementation. Sample also ensures diversity of programme size.	Remote
Any other sampling performed for this audit:			
None.			
Sampling risks identified:			
<p>Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated travel restrictions, the Initial Audit (IA2020) was conducted remotely. The IA report recommended on-site visits including community discussions at the next audit. The IA further recommended to include in the sample sites that demonstrate implementation of both DEC funded and non-DEC funded humanitarian programmes, as well as sites that demonstrate both direct implementation by HelpAge and implementation led by a partner or network member.</p> <p>These recommendations have been adopted during this audit. The sample is representative of HelpAge's portfolio and the auditors have a high level of confidence that the audit findings are representative of the work performed by HelpAge.</p>			

**It is important to note that the audit findings are based on a sample of an organisation's activities, programmes, and documentation as well as direct observation. Findings are analysed to determine an organisation's systematic approach and application of all aspects of the CHS across different contexts and ways of working.*

2. Activities undertaken by the audit team

2.1 Locations Assessed

Locations	Dates	Onsite or remote
Head Office	12-15/12/22 & 20/12/22 & 9/1/23	Remote
Bangladesh (Dhaka and Cox's Bazar)	29/1/23 & 2/2/23	Onsite
Colombia	6/2/23 & 8/2/23	Remote
Syria	7/2/23	Remote
Tanzania	9/2/23	Remote

2.2 Interviews

Level / Position of interviewees	Number of interviewees		Onsite/ Remote
	Female	Male	
Head Office			
Management	6	3	Remote
Staff	6	2	Remote
Country Programme / Project Sites			
Management		5	Onsite and Remote
Staff	1	4	Onsite and Remote
Partner staff	4	7	Onsite and Remote
Others	1	1	Onsite and Remote
Total number of interviewees	18	22	

2.3 Consultations with communities

Type of group and location	Number of participants		Onsite or remote
	Female	Male	
Refugee (mixed group) Bangladesh, Cox's Bazar	5	5	Onsite
Refugee (female group) Bangladesh, Cox's Bazar	10		Onsite
Refugee (older male group) Bangladesh, Cox's Bazar		10	Onsite
Refugee (mixed group with disabilities) Bangladesh, Cox's Bazar	5	5	Onsite
Total number of participants	20	20	

2.4 Opening meeting

Date	2022/12/12
Location	London, United Kingdom (Remote)
Number of participants	25
Any substantive issues arising	None

2.5 Closing meeting

Date	2023/03/02
Location	London, United Kingdom (Remote)
Number of participants	21
Any substantive issues arising	None

3. Background information on the organisation

3.1 General information

HelpAge is a charity and company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 19 October 1983 and registered as a charity on 17 November 1983. HelpAge is the secretariat of a network of members, the HelpAge Global Network. HelpAge's mission is to promote the wellbeing and inclusion of older women and men, and reduce poverty and discrimination in later life. HelpAge works for better services and policies for older women and men in low and middle-income countries, and for changes in the behaviours and attitudes of individuals and societies towards old age. HelpAge's main thematic areas include health and care, social protection, advocacy, and humanitarian response. HelpAge has offices in 13 countries and works with 171 network members in 90 countries. HelpAge employs approximately 470 staff globally. Around 12% of the workforce is employed in its London Hub office, with an additional 6% of staff appointed and paid from the UK, while living and working in another country.

HelpAge's expenditure for the fiscal year that ended in March 2022 was GBP 21,970,000, while it had an income of GBP 22,398,000.

3.2 Governance and management structure

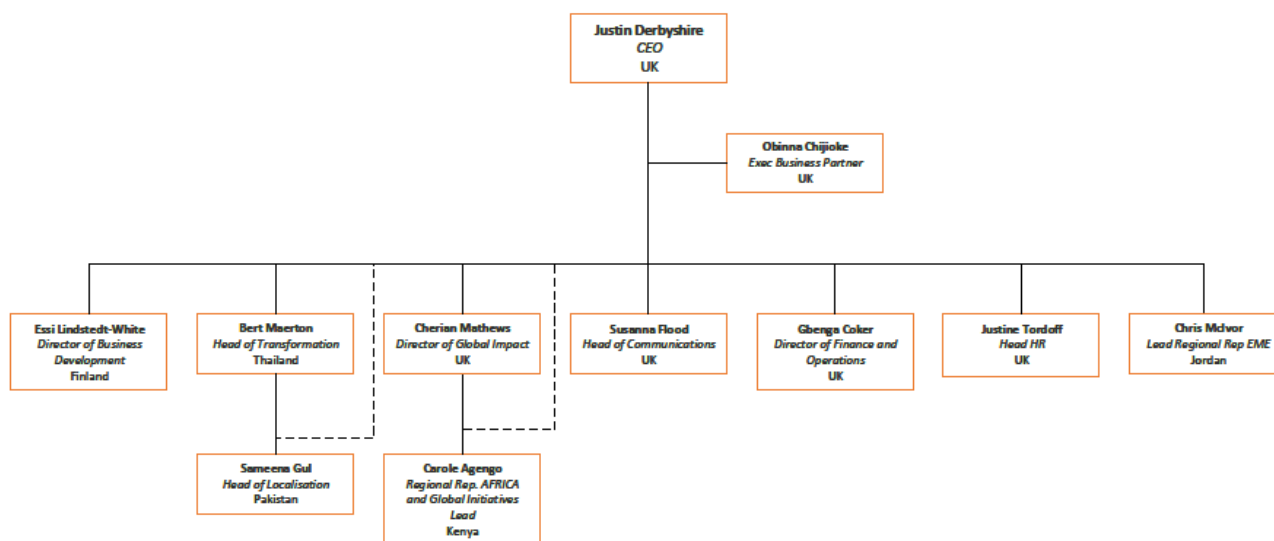
A new organisational structure came into effect on 1 April 2021 following a strategic review conducted in 2020. The organisation now operates as a single team, based in different locations globally, and in 13 Country Offices (CO). The main clusters of global team members are located in Jordan, Kenya, Thailand and the UK, where the Chief Executive Director (CEO) is based.

HelpAge has a Board of Directors who are the Trustees. The Trustees are responsible for the overall management and direction of the organisation, and they are responsible for ensuring that major risks are managed appropriately and regularly reviewed. The Articles of Association allow for a minimum of eight and a maximum of 15 Directors, at least six of whom are nominated by network members and up to nine appointed by the Board of Directors, having regard to their relevant qualifications and skills. The overall gender and geographical composition of the Board is also taken into account. The current Board consists of 12 Trustees, including six nominated by member organisations. The Board of Trustees meets twice a year and is supported by six permanent sub-committees: Executive, Finance and Audit, Governance, People, Strategic Partnership, Income and Impact. Day to day management is exercised by the HelpAge Executive Steering Group. Chaired by the Chief Executive Officer, the Executive Steering Group includes: the Directors for Business Development, Global Impact and Finance and Operations; the Heads of Communications, Human Resources, Localisation and Transformation; a Lead Regional Representative on rotation, the Regional Representative for Africa and Global Initiatives, and the Executive Business Partner. The Extended Executive Steering Group further comprises of the Heads of different teams in the global structure, including the portfolio leads, and the Heads of Operations, Finance, etc.

HelpAge works operationally with both network members and other independent partner organisations in the implementation of specific projects. HelpAge is currently implementing a new localisation strategy, including the transformation of COs into locally led organisations. This has included consultations, internal discussions and the development of local assessment processes. Transition plans have been developed for Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan, and have been initiated for Moldova and Tanzania. The transition of all 13 country offices is expected to take place within a 3 to 4-year period.

HelpAge organisational overview is shown below:

Executive Steering Group



3.3 Internal quality assurance mechanisms and risk management

HelpAge’s commitment to quality assurance mechanisms and processes is reflected in its evaluation and learning approach as outlined in the new Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) Framework. MEAL is noted as one of HelpAge’s organisational priorities in the 2030 Strategy, where the organisation outlines its commitment to investing in new tools and systems, skills, capabilities and learning platforms covering topics such as virtual collaboration; digital measurement and evaluation systems; and innovation and leadership in disruptive times.

HelpAge’s Humanitarian Approach, the Accountability and Quality Framework, and the Project Design Guidelines provide further guidance for evaluation and learning from humanitarian response programmes. MEAL responsibilities are coordinated by the Transformation Team. The team is responsible for providing technical leadership and support across HelpAge’s thematic areas and for advancing the organisation’s agenda on programme quality, learning and evidence to strengthen programme improvement across COs and with network members, among other duties. At operational level, a Portfolio Development Quality Manager (PDQM) is now in place in each of the HelpAge’s portfolios under its Global Impact Department, leading MEAL efforts in the respective portfolio. In addition to the PDQMs within the Inclusive Humanitarian Action Team (IHAT), there are also Humanitarian Programme Managers, at least one per region, who oversee programme quality and accountability in partner-led programmes.

The new MEAL Framework commits to systematic, ongoing collection of data. It describes monitoring activities at the beginning, during and end of a project and specifies the data collection systems to be used, who is responsible, and how frequently data collection, entry and analysis will take place. The roll-out of the new MEAL system and tools are not finalised, and HelpAge currently has some unfilled vacancies in MEAL staff positions. Project monitoring also takes place through the partners’ monthly report to HelpAge’s Project Manager, who in turns reports to the Country Programme Director at CO, or to the Head of Portfolio at HO in the absence of a Country Office. HelpAge has a project-based approach to risk assessments, including Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment (SEAH), contextual, financial, operational, and reputational risks, that are assessed during the project approval phase.

HelpAge’s Internal Audit is an important quality assurance system for the organisation, as outlined in its Internal Audit Charter. The Global Internal Auditor conducts a review every

year of several programmes and COs, including staff compliance with policies. Issues that emerge from internal audits are reported back to the Finance & Audit Committee and followed up during subsequent checks by the Internal Auditor. The HelpAge Annual Report includes the results of the external financial audit of the organisation. HelpAge's projects are also controlled by external audits and donor audits.

The Finance Department under the Business Support Services is responsible for the organisation's strategic financial planning, monitoring and reporting; this is done in close cooperation with programme staff. HelpAge has guidance in place on the procedures for financial management, budget enforcement, purchasing, fixed asset investment and the reporting of financial statements. The organisation works to ensure that funds are spent correctly, transparently and in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. A strong control environment with efficiency measures is consistently applied across the organisation and programmes.

3.4 Work with partner organisations

HelpAge's work consists of an extensive network of members, present in 90 countries, with 171 organisations affiliated to the network. Membership of HelpAge is a formal relationship which is open to any bona-fide organisation involved in issues of individual or population ageing. HelpAge works with both network members and other independent partner organisations at an operational level in the implementation of specific contracts. Most HelpAge activities are carried out in partnership with older people's organisations, community development organisations and non-governmental organisations. The organisation also works with academic institutions on research projects, and with local and national governments and international agencies to ensure that ageing issues are at the centre of development policies.

HelpAge's substantial partnership structure helps to extend the reach of the organisation and to strengthening the capacity of local organisations working with older people; to connect experience with government thinking; and to build a global alliance of organisations working to bring the voices of older people into development processes. The organisation also implements programmes directly, especially in difficult contexts such as conflict-affected contexts and emergencies. HelpAge's commitment to partnership cooperation is outlined in its Partnership Management Manual, establishing the expectations and requirements that are placed on partners and on HelpAge and which are applicable to all HelpAge offices worldwide. The Partnership Management Manual and Contract Management Manual outline the due diligence requirements for partners implementing HelpAge-funded programmes. This is an essential part of HelpAge's governance, ensuring that all contracts with partners are appropriately managed thereby safeguarding the effective delivery of programmes and the impact these achieve.

Partnership due diligence is conducted by HelpAge's COs which are responsible for partnership selection. This includes an organisational information and assessment process which also includes identifying any actions to be taken by the partner candidate to ensure full compliance for a partnership to proceed or be maintained. The Partnership Management Manual also outlines a set of guidelines for the risk categorisation of partnerships. HelpAge has also introduced the SHAPE project, a pilot initiative for developing the capacities of partners implementing humanitarian projects. The SHAPE project is distinctly partner led and focuses on accompaniment instead of one-off trainings. It supports partners to assess their strengths and gaps, and supports partners in implementing their capacity strengthening plans. However, not all current humanitarian partners are included in the pilot.

4. Overall performance of the organisation

4.1 Effectiveness of the governance, internal quality assurance and risk management of the organisation

HelpAge demonstrates progress towards ensuring a systematic approach to its management systems, internal quality assurance and governance systems. This is demonstrated in the new MEAL framework; internal audit procedures; partner due diligence processes; contractual and management procedures and tools for partnerships; safeguarding policy and procedures; accountability and reporting procedures.

The Humanitarian Approach Policy outlines HelpAge's commitment to safeguarding and accountability. HelpAge's current localisation efforts through further decentralising its activities by transforming COs into locally led organisations, and transferring its duties to local partners, complement HelpAge's efforts to strengthen partner due diligence and capacity

development, including in the area of quality assurance and risk management. However, while partners undergo an initial assessment not all partners are being regularly reassessed. Network members and partners are selected and managed according to the quality assurance system described in the Partnership Management Manual and associated due diligence requirements, partner capacity assessment and strengthening processes, contract management, and programme management policies and tools to support quality programming. Capacity development for humanitarian partners is being further strengthened through the SHAPE project. However, as noted above, the project is in a pilot phase and does not currently cover all partners.

HelpAge is making progress in ensuring a systematic approach to monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEAL), as demonstrated through the implementation of its new MEAL framework. However, this is not yet fully rolled out, and the organisation is experiencing some MEAL capacity gaps across its operations. Internal audits are regularly conducted by the Global Internal Auditor and governed by the Internal Audit Charter. Issues that emerge from internal audits are reported to the governing body and there is a formal system in place to ensure follow up.

HelpAge has processes in place to facilitate implementation of its policies throughout the organisation, including through the dissemination of new policies and procedures through induction and refresher training, biweekly global town hall meetings, and through the use of online tools such Yammer. However, not all staff are aware of policies and procedures relevant to their respective roles and responsibilities.

With regard to risk management approach, HelpAge has a corporate risk matrix capturing contextual, financial, operational, organisational, and reputational risks, including safeguarding risks, which is regularly updated and reviewed by the Board and the Senior Management Team, however, the organisation does not have an established risk management policy. Project related risks are also assessed during the project approval phase, however, these risk assessments are not always updated during the project lifecycle.

A strong financial control environment with efficiency measures is consistently applied across the organisation and programmes, including detective (e.g. financial monitoring, financial spot checks, and external audits) and corrective controls (e.g. disciplinary procedures). Preventive measures include segregation of duties to reduce the risk of misuse of funds.

HelpAge has implemented several actions to remedy weaknesses identified in the Initial Audit. In order to address the weaknesses and observations identified during the IA, a working group (WG) was established, under the coordination of the Global MEAL Adviser. Key members of the group included the relevant leads of areas of the organisation that were highlighted for improvement. The WG met regularly to develop a set of proposed actions for each of the identified areas, agreeing a CHS improvement action plan, including owners and deadlines for each action. The MEAL Adviser was tasked to perform the follow up of the action plan. However, since the IA, HelpAge went through a significant restructuring process and the management and leadership of the CHS action plan also changed. The position holding the lead for the CHS WG was removed, and the CHS action plan remained without a coordinator for a few months until new positions and responsibilities were assigned. During this time, HelpAge did not ensure a regular monitoring system to assess progress on the implementation of the CHS action plan. Nonetheless, although the group did not meet formally, the implementation actions remained with relevant teams and partial progress was achieved.

Staff interviewed feel that HelpAge is evolving in the right direction in terms of ensuring the organisation fulfils its commitments in terms of the CHS, but that they have faced a lot of change in a short time period and that it will take time for these changes to take full effect.

4.2 Level of implementation of the CHS and progress on compliance

HelpAge remains committed to the application of the CHS across the organisation particularly in its humanitarian programme portfolio, including in projects implemented with partners. It continues to demonstrate good performance in areas such as ensuring that programme and project design responds to the needs of communities in an appropriate and relevant manner; adapting programmes to changing needs; building assistance based on local capacity; strengthening the resilience of communities; and developing local capacities. HelpAge is prioritising localisation, with a clear objective to transform its COs into locally led organisations. It works closely with communities and local authorities and is an active participant in networks and coordination fora, especially concerning the rights of older people and people with disabilities. Other strengths of the organisation with regard to the CHS are:

strong levels of compliance with financial management requirements, coordination, participation, and feedback.

The organisation is perceived by staff and communities as efficient, impartial, transparent and supportive. Staff consider HelpAge as organisation that develops their capacities, although they acknowledge they have experienced some difficulties in adjusting to the recent restructuring process, given the number of changes and increased workloads.

HelpAge continues to provide capacity building opportunities to staff and partners on the CHS and related requirements, including safeguarding, complaints management, Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH), and prevention of fraud and corruption. However, not all staff and partners, particularly at country programme level, are familiar with the CHS standard.

During the previous audit (IA2020), the audit team identified 9 weaknesses and noted several observations. The IA was conducted at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and no site visit was possible. Therefore, community members and people affected by crisis could not be consulted and findings were limited to Head Office, Regional Office, Country Office and Partner Organisation levels. In this Renewal Audit, site visits included direct community consultations. The weaknesses identified during the IA were linked to aspects including the lack of a systematic approach to understanding constraints; a lack of monitoring systems and procedures; a lack of continuous identification of risks and unintended negative effects; the absence of procedures for the referral of out-of-scope complaints; the non-identification of lessons learned and the lack of systematic knowledge sharing; insufficient awareness among staff of relevant policies; and the lack of systematic environmental impact analysis. Since the IA, the organisation has implemented improvements to address most of the weaknesses identified. More specifically this includes ensuring constraints are analysed and addressed in programme design; improving the monitoring of activities; identifying and acting upon potential or actual unintended negative effects; improving risk identification and analysis; improving the access to mechanisms to record knowledge and experience; and undertaking environmental impact assessments. One weaknesses has not yet been fully addressed, while four new weaknesses have been identified, specifically regarding the lack of policies and procedures to assure that external communications are accurate, ethical and respectful; failure to ensure that complaint response mechanisms (CRMs) are developed together with communities and that complaints are managed in a timely, fair and appropriate manner; and failure to ensure that HelpAge's communications, including its web page, inform clearly how the CRM can be accessed and the scope of issues it can address.

The organisation continues to demonstrate an organisational culture where commitment to safeguarding and PSEAH is taken seriously, in accordance with the Code of Conduct (CoC) and Safeguarding Policy. HelpAge has recently approved a new Safeguarding Policy, replacing its previous Protection Policy. The new policy has taken into consideration the weakness identified during the IA, and integrates the CRM. A Safeguarding WG has been created, and a Global Safeguarding Advisor has been recruited. The Safeguarding Policy and CoC define HelpAge's values and the expected behaviours of staff and partners, including prohibition of exploitation, abuse and other forms of discrimination. The CoC makes clear reference to PSEAH principles, including the duty to report allegations or suspicions of SEAH. PSEAH and complaints management are standing agenda items at Board and People Sub Committee meetings. HelpAge's CRM is in place, covering PSEAH amongst other issues, HelpAge's partner due diligence assessment checks if they have a CRM.

HelpAge's Humanitarian Approach commits the organisation to a 'do no harm' approach in its humanitarian programming. HelpAge ensures that projects take account of needs and risks and identify potential negative effects. The organisation works with partners to implement strategies and guidance to prevent SEAH. HelpAge's corporate risk matrix includes SEAH-related risks.

HelpAge systematically shares information with communities, including on expected staff behaviour, PSEAH and the CRM, but it does not have guidance or procedures which describe the minimum set of information to be shared with communities and other stakeholders. Information is shared with the communities in appropriate languages and formats, although in some country programmes, the CoC and other key policies are not translated into the local language. HelpAge is committed to the participation of communities and uses different channels to engage them at all stages of the work, including consultation on CRM design, although this is not done on a systematic basis. Most but not all staff show a good understating of HelpAge's policies, including those related to PSEAH. Staff understand the

consequences of not adhering to HelpAge's policies and the organisation endeavours to ensure staff understand its commitment to safeguarding through staff induction training, as well as refresher training provided to staff and partners.

HelpAge continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to localisation. HelpAge's policies and procedures ensure a good understanding of the context and the different active stakeholders, with project design responding to the needs of the communities, strengthening their resilience, and developing local capacities. HelpAge's new localisation agenda envisages transferring activities from COs to locally led organisations. Other areas of strength include building on local capacities and leadership through local partners and older peoples associations; strong coordination through local structures including the cluster system; and communication in languages and media that are accessible.

The communities consulted confirm their satisfaction with HelpAge's approach and activities. They generally describe HelpAge as an organisation that is non-discriminatory, providing services and assistance customised to the needs of older people and people with disabilities, often not covered by any other NGOs, with proposed actions adapted to local realities and to improving their resilience.

HelpAge's commitment to gender equality and diversity is outlined in its Strategy 2030, Gender Equality Policy and Humanitarian Approach Policy, which commit the organisation to understanding and responding to the diversity of older age and to advancing equality. The Humanitarian Inclusion Standards, developed by HelpAge, focus explicitly on the inclusion of disadvantaged and marginalised people and are well socialised and operationalised across HelpAge offices, network members and partners. The Sex and Age Disaggregated Data (SAAD) Minimum Standards, Project Quality Standards, Gender Minimum Standards and Rapid Needs Assessment for Older People (RNA-OP) prescribe the collection, analysis and reporting of gender, age and disability disaggregated data. HelpAge actively advocates to other agencies to adopt the Humanitarian Inclusion Standards and has developed its own Gender Minimum Standards. HelpAge's CoC and HR Policies ensure fair, transparent and non-discriminatory HR management procedures that are compliant with national employment law. HelpAge has established a Diversity and Inclusion Group whose members are made up of staff from different countries, teams and grades throughout the organisation.

4.3 Performance against each CHS Commitment

Commitment	Strong points and areas for improvement	Feedback from communities	Average score*
Commitment 1: Humanitarian assistance is appropriate and relevant	HelpAge works within a right-based framework and upholds a commitment to provide impartial assistance and to non-discrimination as demonstrated through key policy, strategy, and operational documents. HelpAge is an organisation that supports diversity and inclusion of the most vulnerable and is committed to partnerships based on shared values. HelpAge provides guidance and procedures to inform the systematic inclusion of context analysis into project proposals and supports partners with training on context analysis. However, staff indicate that context analyses are not always updated. Well-structured needs assessments indicate a thorough understanding of vulnerabilities and capacities of communities, and the organisation requires staff and partners to collect disaggregated data for all programmes by age, gender and abilities. Processes are in place to ensure that regular assessments, reporting, feedback and monitoring are used to identify and respond to changing needs at community and individual levels. However, project risk	Communities perceive HelpAge to be an impartial and non-discriminatory organisation and consider that it conducts needs assessment in a participatory and safe way. Communities feel satisfied with changes made to programme activities.	2.7

	assessments are not always monitored and updated during the project lifetime.		
Commitment 2: Humanitarian response is effective and timely	<p>HelpAge's transition to a more decentralised governance structure and partnerships with local and international NGOs, authorities and communities facilitate it to deliver timely humanitarian response programmes. The organisation implements programme activities using technical standards and good practice and it has processes in place to review and adapt its capacities and to identify capacities and gaps of partners. However, organisational capacity is not yet fully ensured in all countries to effectively meet programming requirements and support capacity strengthening priorities. HelpAge is committed to a 'do no harm' approach and requires risk assessments as part of project proposal review and approval processes and monitors project activities to ensure actions remain safe for communities. Risk mitigation procedures and practice are evident for a range of project risk areas such as fraud and corruption, operational, reputational, security and safety and environment. HelpAge has a systematic approach to M&E and guidelines and tools to enable projects to continually adapt and improve. The organisation has decision-making mechanisms in place to avoid unnecessary delays in emergencies. However, resources allocated for monitoring are not sufficient to ensure that programmes are systematically monitored in line with guidelines and procedures. In some contexts, HelpAge has systems in place to refer unmet needs, but this is not in place in all programmes.</p>	Communities indicate that they have safe access to the assistance and services, that HelpAge delivers its response in a timely manner and that they consider staff to be competent. Communities feel that HelpAge and partners encourage their participation in the monitoring process and welcome their input.	2.1
Commitment 3: Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects	<p>HelpAge has a clear organisational commitment to the prevention of negative effects (do-no-harm), safeguarding, PSEAH, and to the strengthening of local capacities. Participatory risk assessments are conducted in collaboration with partners. HelpAge uses existing hazard and risk information to develop an understanding of the context and stakeholders where it operates. Systems for protection of sensitive personal information are in place and staff receive training on data protection. However, not all programmes have systems in place to safeguard personal information collected from communities. HelpAge demonstrates relatively strong performance in terms of support for improving the resilience of local communities and building on local capacities. The organisation has in place guidance and tools to identify and act upon actual and unintended negative effects (safety, dignity, SEAH, gender, livelihoods, environment). However, these are not used systematically across all humanitarian programmes. HelpAge discusses project exit strategies with partners and fosters early recovery and support for the local economy through its programming.</p>	Communities generally indicate that they feel empowered and have become more resilient because of HelpAge's programmes. Communities consider that the organisation adheres to the principle of informed consent for data gathering.	2.6

<p>Commitment 4: Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback</p>	<p>Participation of communities in all stages of the work is reflected in key policies and operational guidance; partner funding agreements do not, however, reference community participation. HelpAge is committed to inclusive representation and actively seeks feedback from communities, using a range of approaches and channels to facilitate the participation of different groups, however, the organisation does not monitor how partners act on feedback received from communities. Communication with communities is transparent, and in languages and formats that are easily understood and appropriate, however, some key information such as HelpAge's CoC is not always translated into most relevant local languages. HelpAge staff and partners do not always have a clear understanding on what information should be shared with communities and other stakeholders; the organisation does not have a guidance for information sharing requirement. Evidence from interviews with staff and review of external communications (e.g. website) indicates that HQAI is committed to ethical communications however, the organisation does not have a guidance or procedures in place to assure this.</p>	<p>Communities feel well informed and perceive HelpAge's approach to communication as appropriate and clear. Communities confirm that they contributed to project design and had opportunities to provide feedback and to raise concerns. Community members confirm that they have received feedback from the organisation on suggestions they had submitted.</p>	<p>2.1</p>
<p>Commitment 5: Complaints are welcomed and addressed</p>	<p>HelpAge is committed to accountability to affected populations, including commitments on PSEAH and complaint management; this is reflected in the recently approved Safeguarding Policy and the establishment of a Global Safeguarding WG. However, not all staff are aware of the CRM guidelines and procedures. HelpAge's CRM welcomes all complaints, including sensitive and operational complaints. CRMs are adapted to local contexts and are usually developed in consultation with communities, but this is not always the case. HelpAge encourages and supports its implementing partners to have a CRM in place, where partners do not have such mechanism in place, partners are requested to ensure communities have access to HelpAge's CRM. Partner assessment does not include consideration of the scope of partner CRMs. HelpAge uses CRMs as a tool for change, for adapting projects and identifying new issues and needs. Complaints that do not fall within scope are referred to a relevant party through HelpAge's network. However, there is no guidance or procedure to identify and manage referral pathways systematically. HelpAge is committed to manage complaints in a timely, fair and appropriate manner, but its monitoring system does not include aspects regarding timely or safe management of complaints, including those complaints received by HelpAge's partners.</p>	<p>Community members indicate that they feel informed, including around organisational commitments on PSEAH and staff behaviour, and know how to access the CRM. Some communities confirm being provided with opportunities to contribute to the design and implementation of the CRM.</p>	<p>1.7</p>

<p>Commitment 6: Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary</p>	<p>HelpAge is committed to coordination and collaboration with partners and other stakeholders at global, national and local levels, while ensuring impartiality. Work with partners is governed by agreements that respect each partner's mandate, obligations, and independence, including clear reference to expected staff behaviour standards or Code of Conduct. HelpAge has a partner due diligence procedure in place, but not all partner assessments are updated systematically. HelpAge is committed to supporting partners' capacity building needs, in line with its commitment to the localisation agenda. It has recently introduced the SHAPE programme to support capacity building needs for humanitarian partners. However, not all partners have updated capacity building plans. HelpAge has a good understanding of the different stakeholders at all levels, contributing to ensuring that their interventions are complementary to others, but it does not have procedures in place to guide this in a systematic way. HelpAge actively shares information with different stakeholders, such as surveys, needs assessments and reports.</p>	<p>Communities perceive HelpAge as a fair and independent organisation, while the assistance received is considered to be well coordinated, without any duplication or inefficiencies.</p>	<p>2.7</p>
<p>Commitment 7: Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve</p>	<p>HelpAge is updating its MEAL Framework and its organisational learning approach is well developed. It has internal processes in place to record and share knowledge, experience and lessons learnt. For external learning, HelpAge has rolled out the HLA Kaya Platform as its repurposed knowledge platform (KP) and it is already accessible to staff in some countries. However, the KP still requires translations of knowledge resources and materials for non-English speaking staff to facilitate their access to organisational knowledge and experiences in their work. HelpAge is active in sector wide networks and contributes to learning and exchange with humanitarian coordination mechanisms. The organisation has recently updated its guidance and procedures for lesson learning at global and country level, MEAL, and learning exchanges sessions supported by the newly established Transformation Team. However, the organisation does not systematically capture the outcomes of internal learning experiences and does not always work effectively with partners to ensure that lessons learned are included in programme design</p>	<p>Interviews with communities indicate that HelpAge welcomes feedback and shares learning from organisational experience. Communities believe that the organisation has improved its programmes based on learning from previous projects.</p>	<p>2.3</p>
<p>Commitment 8: Staff are supported to do their job effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably</p>	<p>HelpAge is an organisation that has the management, staff and capacity in place to deliver its programmes, although the organisation is experiencing some staff shortages in particular areas. Staff policies and procedures are fair, transparent, non-discriminatory, and staff adhere to these. HelpAge's partner assessment process reviews partner's Human Resources management. HelpAge demonstrates a clear commitment to invest in staff development, supporting the continuous development and management of</p>	<p>Consultations with communities indicate they perceive staff to be competent and effective in their work, in terms of knowledge, attitude, behaviour and skills.</p>	<p>2.2</p>

	<p>staff competencies across the organisation. New staff follow an induction training programme, while refresher training and other training opportunities are provided. Staff understanding of HelpAge’s policies and procedures is further facilitated through regular town hall meetings or using online networking tools. Capacity building opportunities are provided to partners, although with some limitations. The organisation reviews staff performance systematically. HelpAge has a Code of Conduct applicable to all its staff, volunteers, consultants and partners. It is well understood by staff and partners. However, not all staff recall key policies or procedures relevant to their area of responsibility. HelpAge is guided by the duty of care responsibility of its staff, focusing on their wellbeing, security and safety, including work-life balance. A comprehensive security management framework, including implementing partners, is in place.</p>		
<p>Commitment 9: Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose</p>	<p>HelpAge has established policies and procedures in place to ensure that resources are used responsibly for their intended purpose. Staff and partners consider that HelpAge uses its resources prudently. Policies and processes govern the use and management of resources and the organisation takes a robust approach to fighting corruption, fraud, bribery and misuse of resources. HelpAge demonstrates a clear commitment to balancing quality, cost, and timeliness, maximising value for money in programme design and procurement processes. However, monitoring of these criteria is not systematically performed in all projects. The organisation has internal audit procedures and practices in place and strong budgetary control across its operations. HelpAge maintains risk registers at organisational and project levels; at country level, business plans are developed with input from key stakeholders. However, the organisation does not have a comprehensive risk policy or procedure in place. The organisation operates in an environmentally responsible manner and has solid policies and guidance in place. HelpAge undertakes environmental impact assessments, as appropriate.</p>	<p>Communities indicate they perceive HelpAge to be an environmentally conscious organisation, that manages its resources prudently.</p>	<p>2.7</p>

* *Note: Average scores are a sum of the scores per commitment divided by the number of indicators in each Commitment, except when one of the indicators of a commitment scores 0 or if several scores 1 on the indicators of a Commitment lead to the issuance of a major non-conformity/ weakness at the level of the Commitment. In these two cases the overall score for the Commitment is 0.*

5. Summary of open weaknesses

Weaknesses	Type	Resolution due date	Status	Date closed out

2020-2.1: HelpAge does not take a systematic approach to ensuring constraints are analysed and addressed in programme designs.	Minor	2022/06/30	Closed	2023/04/25
2020-2.5: HelpAge does not adequately document the monitoring of activities, outputs and outcomes of humanitarian programme responses	Minor	2022/06/30	Closed	2023/04/25
2020-3.6: HelpAge does not systematically identify and act upon potential or actual unintended negative effects in a timely and systematic manner.	Minor	2022/06/30	Closed	2023/04/25
2020-3.7: RNA-OPs, programme design documentation, Protection Policy and Guidelines do not appear to include explicit risk identification and analysis at a programme level, nor is there a process in place to ensure programme level risks are systematically reassessed throughout implementation.	Minor	2022/06/30	Closed	2023/04/25
2023-4.7: HelpAge policies and procedures do not ensure that external communications are accurate, ethical and respectful.	Minor	2026/04/25	New	
2023-5.1: HelpAge guidelines and procedures do not ensure that communities are consulted in the design, implementation and monitoring of CRMs.	Minor	2026/04/25	New	
2023-5.2: HelpAge's communications, including on its website, do not provide information on how the CRM can be accessed and the scope of issues it can address.	Minor	2026/04/25	New	
2023-5.3: HelpAge does not ensure that complaints are systematically managed in a timely, fair and appropriate manner.	Minor	2026/04/25	New	
2020-5.7: Commitments and procedures relating to the referral of out of-scope complaints, have not been systematically implemented.	Minor	2022/06/30	Closed	2023/04/25
2020-7.1: Programme proposals do not include or identify lessons learned from previous programmes, especially from different countries and regions.	Minor	2022/06/30	Closed	2023/04/25
2020-7.5: HelpAge does not have mechanisms in place to systematically record and share knowledge throughout the organisation.	Minor	2022/06/30	Closed	2023/04/25
2020-8.2: Staff do not adhere to or understand all policies that are relevant to them.	Minor	2026/04/25	Extended	
2020-9.4: HelpAge does not systematically undertake environmental impact assessments, in accordance with its own relevant policies.	Minor	2022/06/30	Closed	2023/04/25
Total Number of open Weaknesses	5			

6. Recommendations for next audit cycle

Specific recommendation for sampling or selection of sites or any other specificities to be considered	No variation from the standard sampling rate is recommended. Sampling should be based on the number of Country Programmes active at the time of the next surveillance audit.
---	--

It is recommended to include country programmes with different stages of maturity regarding HelpAge's localisation efforts in the sampling for the next surveillance audit.

7. Lead auditor recommendation

In our opinion, HelpAge International continues to demonstrate a high satisfactory level of commitment to the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability and its inclusion in the Independent Verification scheme is justified.

Name and signature of lead auditor:



Jordi Capdevila

Date and place:

Barcelona, 25 April 2023

8. HQAI decision

Registration in the Independent Verification Scheme maintained:

Accepted
 Refused

Next audit: before 2026/06/09

Name and signature of HQAI Deputy Executive Director:

Désirée Walter



Date and place:

Geneva, 9 June 2023

9. Acknowledgement of the report by the organisation

Space reserved for the organisation

Any reservations regarding the audit findings and/or any remarks regarding the behaviour of the HQAI audit team:

Yes No

If yes, please give details:

Acknowledgement and Acceptance of Findings:

I acknowledge and understand the findings of the audit

Yes No

I accept the findings of the audit

Yes No

Name and signature of the organisation's representative:



Cherian Mathews
 Chief Executive Officer
 (Interim)
 HelpAge International

Date and place: Type text here

05/09/2023
 London, UK

Appeal

In case of disagreement with the decision on certification, the organisation can appeal to HQAI within 14 days after being informed of the decision. HQAI will investigate the content of the appeal and propose a solution within 10 days after receiving the appeal.

If the solution is deemed not to be satisfactory, the organisation can inform HQAI in writing within 30 days after being informed of the proposed solution, of their intention to maintain the appeal.

HQAI will transmit the case to the Chair of the Advisory and Complaint Board who will constitute a panel made of at least two experts who have no conflict of interest in the case in question. These will strive to come to a decision within 30 days.

The details of the Appeals Procedure can be found in document PRO049 – Appeal Procedure.

Annex 1: Explanation of the scoring scale*

Scores	Meaning: for all verification scheme options	Technical meaning for all independent verification and certification audits
0	Your organisation does not work towards applying the CHS commitment.	<p>Score 0: indicates a weakness that is so significant that the organisation is unable to meet the commitment. This leads to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent verification: major weakness. • Certification: major non-conformity, leading to a major corrective action request (CAR) – No certificate can be issue or immediate suspension of certificate.
1	Your organisation is making efforts towards applying this requirement, but these are not systematic.	<p>Score 1: indicates a weakness that does not immediately compromise the integrity of the commitment but requires to be corrected to ensure the organisation can continuously deliver against it. This leads to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent verification: minor weakness • Certification: minor non-conformity, leading to a minor corrective action request (CAR).
2	Your organisation is making systematic efforts towards applying this requirement, but certain key points are still not addressed.	<p>Score 2: indicates an issue that deserves attention but does not currently compromise the conformity with the requirement. This leads to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent verification and certification: observation.
3	Your organisation conforms to this requirement, and organisational systems ensure that it is met throughout the organisation and over time – the requirement is fulfilled.	<p>Score 3: indicates full conformity with the requirement. This leads to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent verification and certification: conformity.
4	Your organisation's work goes beyond the intent of this requirement and demonstrates innovation. It is applied in an exemplary way across the organisation and organisational systems ensure high quality is maintained across the organisation and over time.	<p>Score 4: indicates an exemplary performance in the application of the requirement.</p>

* Scoring Scale from the CHSA Verification Scheme 2020