

# **GAROP**

## **ESTABLISHING A SECRETARIAT AND CAMPAIGN STRATEGY**

### **DISCUSSION PAPER**

#### **SECRETARIAT, GOVERNANCE, MEMBER ENGAGEMENT & RESOURCING**

##### **1. Introduction**

The GAROP Steering Group decided in August 2014 to establish a resourced Secretariat; in 2015, HelpAge International agreed to host it. In early 2016, a consultancy began, to help GAROP establish a strategy for achieving a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons and to help determine the appropriate roles of a Secretariat, the governance arrangements needed to oversee the alliance, and the nature of resourcing required to sustain it.

To date, the consultants have interviewed a wide range of GAROP members, particularly those that have been most active to date, and a small number of external informants (20 interviews in total); and conducted a survey of all members (with 31 responses, 29 of which were useable). Analysis of these interviews and survey responses forms the basis of the present papers.

A separate Discussion Paper poses questions to focus attention on influencing strategy. This Discussion Paper covers the structural and resourcing decisions needed to enable the alliance to deliver the strategy.

##### **2. Roles & Relationships**

There is overwhelming support for the decision to create a resourced Secretariat for GAROP, with all interviewees and 27 survey respondents agreeing with the decision (the remaining 2 being 'don't knows'). This support arises from a widespread perception that the campaign to date, while there have been achievements, has lacked coherence and drive.

There is broad agreement that progress and activity in Geneva and New York has not been matched by influencing work in countries, and that the necessary communication and linkages between the two are hard to create and sustain without some central coordination. Core members have contributed regularly to the work, but insufficient coordination, in spite of best efforts, has meant their contributions have not been maximised. Several respondents felt that members needed leadership, to be 'driven', 'mobilised' or 'excited'. Some respondents felt that, beyond agreement that everyone wants a convention, messaging has not been tight. With all members having other priorities alongside the convention, there is a perception that people whose sole focus is the convention are a necessity.

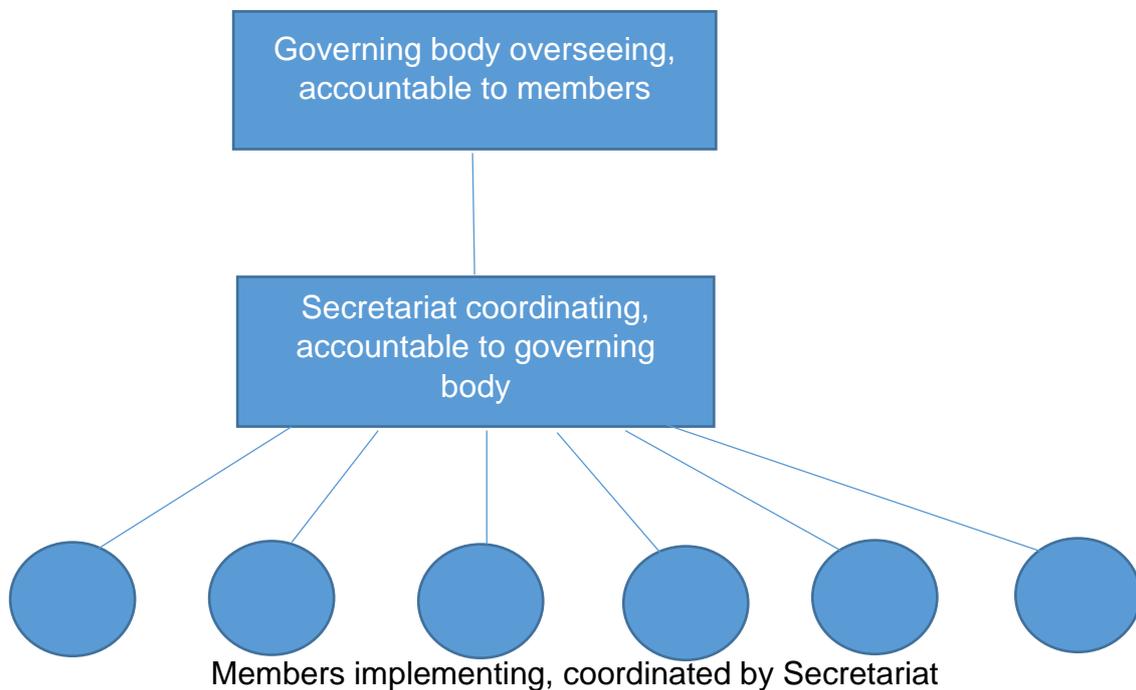
This did not amount to a view that 'we need people to do the campaign for us.' While there was some variation of emphasis here, all respondents believed that

frontline campaigning should be conducted primarily by members, not by the Secretariat on their behalf. Several emphasised the value of older people themselves, and their movements, being at the forefront of direct representation (some relating this to the power of the disability movement's 'nothing about us without us' slogan and approach). So the Secretariat's role is to ensure that members do the advocacy work, and to coordinate them in doing so, rather than to do the advocacy themselves.

In addition to these rationales, it is crucial to recognise that, between them, members have a range of skills, knowledge and experience that would be impossible to replicate or exceed within a small staff team in the Secretariat. The alliance will function effectively when it is able to draw effectively on the combined strengths of the members; the skills in the Secretariat need to be those which enable this to happen.

Members were equally clear that they themselves should be responsible for determining strategy and overall direction, and for oversight of the campaign. The Secretariat should be seen as operating within this, primarily to mobilise members appropriately, but being accountable to the members.

So the Secretariat should be accountable to the members; and should primarily be the body that orchestrates the members to deliver the campaign, looking something like this:



This understanding of the respective roles of Secretariat and members suggests a number of directions for the alliance, outlined in the following sections.

### 3. Governance & Member Engagement

Members' responses in interviews and survey responses indicate that, alongside a successful campaign, they are looking for a sense of ownership, belonging, agency and responsibility. This can and should be delivered through:

- Involvement in setting the strategy
- Involvement in determining who oversees the alliance and the campaign, and a belief that those people understand and reflect members' wishes, situations and constraints
- Involvement in planning within the strategy
- Involvement in, and accepting responsibility for, delivering key components of the campaign in their own territories and spheres of influence.

So the membership as a whole needs a stake in how the alliance is governed; and needs a way of being involved in planning and executing the strategy. Alongside this, other considerations in composing the alliance's structure were raised by interviewees:

- The alliance exists to run a campaign, which will often be fast-moving and needing swift operational decision making and action. The governing body's powers need to be focused on overall strategic and resourcing decision making; within this, the Secretariat and other groups need to be empowered to proceed with operational and tactical decisions and actions without constant reference back to the governing body for approval.
- The governing body, and any other groups formed to decide and take actions, need to be composed of people able to take decisions on behalf of their organisations, as well as the wider membership; in addition to having the confidence of the membership (as a result of transparent and inclusive selection) they need to be people who hold an appropriate position in their own organisations to decide on their behalf.
- Since core resourcing for the Secretariat is certain to come from the members themselves, and probably the largest members (see section 6 below), there is a case for ensuring that senior managers from those organisations are present on the governing body; there is a natural tension between this and the requirement that the membership as a whole has a say and stake in governance of the alliance.
- While specialists in advocacy and campaigning need to be engaged in timely campaign tactical decisions, they are not necessarily the best people to take decisions on overall strategy, resourcing and Secretariat oversight; there is a case for creating two types of body: governance on the one hand, and operational on the other, with clearly separate responsibilities.
- The Secretariat will be employed by one of the members, HelpAge International, which for legal and practical purposes will need to appoint a line manager of the head of the Secretariat; but the head of the Secretariat will need to be accountable to the GAROP governing body. HelpAge International will need to have an ex officio place on the governing body, to ensure clear and appropriate liaison between the alliance's decision making and responsible line management.

All of the above suggests a shape for the alliance consisting of a governing body; at least one operational planning and executing body; and a Secretariat serving and supporting both. The following suggestions and questions arise:

### Governing body

*Composition:* This should be made up of a small number of senior people, able to take decisions on behalf of the membership as a whole and their own organisations, including the CEO of HelpAge International or his appointee. Some representation of the membership as a whole is desirable; some appointees from organisations making significant resource contributions may also be a necessity. It should not be too big, or it will become unwieldy; but it should be larger than the current Steering Group. About 6-10 members is suggested.

*Terms of reference:* These should focus on approval of strategy (after consultation with the wider membership); approval of terms of reference for, and oversight of, any working groups; oversight of the Secretariat; and oversight of resources. This would require no more than perhaps two to three meetings per year and occasional consultation between these. The governing body, having approved their terms of reference, should be encouraged and enabled to allow the Secretariat and working groups to function without the governing body's interference.

*Accountability:* The governing body needs to be accountable primarily to the membership as a whole, not to the organisations from which its members come. With no formal Members' Assembly likely (for budgetary reasons), this accountability would need to be delivered through electronic communication; opportunities for accountability through a meeting of some of the members during, for example, OEWG meetings may be possible.

### Campaign planning and action working group(s)

With a strategy in place, GAROP needs an operational group, to work with the Secretariat on planning and execution of the influencing work.

*Composition:* This needs to be composed of all the main people involved in actual influencing work. Personnel in New York and Geneva, and those in countries that are critical for campaign success, should be part of this group. It may be that the group needs, within it, a core group to do the detailed planning, but a wider group of those carrying out country-level influencing work should be included in consultation and e-mail correspondence.

*Terms of reference:* This is an operational group, action-oriented. Its terms of reference should focus on day-to-day and month-to-month planning and action, making the links for example between progress in New York and Geneva and clarity on which missions need to be mobilised or neutralised for the next stage, and which national governments would make a critical difference to progress, then determining who will lobby them, how and when. Preparations for alliance unity at major moments such as OEWG meetings should be the responsibility of this group.

*Other groups:* While the above group is core to enabling GAROP to make progress, it may be that other groups could contribute in important ways. If a public

mobilisation of older people and their organisations is important at particular phases, a group of those experienced in delivering such mobilisations may be needed. A group of policy/research specialists and those experienced in UN negotiations on wording could usefully work in advance, for example, on the content of a possible convention. If public awareness is an important part of the campaign, a public messaging group may be important. And so on. These should be composed of specialists from within member organisations who can contribute their expertise to the collective, and should exist only for the period in which they are needed.

*Accountability:* Each of these groups should be directly accountable to the governing body.

#### **4. Responsibilities & Shape of the Secretariat**

There is widespread agreement across the membership that the primary roles of the Secretariat should be focused on mobilising, coordinating, facilitating and enabling the members, who will do the influencing and campaigning work themselves. This is partly due to necessity (a large proportion of the influencing work needs to happen at national level, where members are present), is partly a sensible way of drawing on the existing and substantial knowledge, skills and experience of the members, and is also a chosen way of working as an alliance.

It is critical that, when selecting the personnel for the Secretariat, these roles are at the forefront of recruiters' minds. A willingness and ability to mobilise and facilitate others is a skill in itself, and requires a mindset driven by (as one secretariat member of another alliance has put it) 'taking joy in enabling others to shine.' Staff seeking to make a name for themselves in the world of policy analysis, for example, would be likely to function in a way detrimental to the activism of members.

The suggestion during interviews was that the minimum Secretariat size necessary to deliver the necessary work would be three. This is, of course, dependent on resources (see section 6), but it is clear that fewer than three would reduce significantly the ability of the alliance to achieve its goal. The three personnel, it is suggested, would be:

- *General Secretary* (or similar job title, avoiding the suggestion that this post in some way directs the members): Accountable to the governing body, with lead responsibility for motivating and mobilising member organisations and their CEOs (a 'servant leader'); resource mobilisation; building relations with other coalitions and potential allies; support to the governing body; facilitation of senior personnel of member organisations; management of other Secretariat staff; and liaison at policy level with HelpAge International departments such as Human Resources.
- *Advocacy & Campaigns Officer*. Accountable to the General Secretary, with responsibility for supporting the working groups, encouraging, cajoling and enabling them to deliver; ensuring smooth communication between them; mobilising policy and advocacy staff of members for specific actions; creating the linkages between New York and Geneva people and the contacts in countries where advocacy towards national governments is needed.

- *Administration & Internal Communications Officer*: Accountable to the General Secretary, with lead responsibility for ensuring smooth administration of the Secretariat itself; development and maintenance of website and newsletter content (with technical assistance and oversight from the HelpAge International IT department); practical arrangements for meetings, including travel and accommodation; liaison with HelpAge International departments providing support facilities such as financial administration, HR administration, office facilities, etc.

There is wide consensus, and therefore probably little to debate, about the broad content of the Secretariat's roles; the key question here is whether the resources can be found to cover their costs. A crude estimate of salaries and other employment expenses, plus operational costs, would suggest that a budget of £200-250,000 sterling (US\$280-350,000) would be needed. See section 6 on resourcing.

## **5. Hosting**

HelpAge International will host the Secretariat. This has been warmly welcomed by most of the organisations interviewed or surveyed for this consultancy. To ensure that this overwhelmingly positive response remains, it is important that:

- The Secretariat – and particularly the General Secretary – recognises that, although legally employed by HelpAge International, it is accountable primarily to the GAROP members through their governing body, and behaves accordingly;
- HelpAge International recognises that it is the governing body of GAROP that steers and determines the Secretariat's work, not HelpAge International or the person assigned there to line manage the General Secretary;
- Income and expenditure for GAROP are transparently accounted for, including any overhead or service charges made by HelpAge International;
- The members of GAROP, and governing body members in particular, recognise that HelpAge International carries legal, employment and financial liabilities in its role as host, and reach an appropriate agreement on how any such liabilities occurring will be dealt with;
- Branding of GAROP's and the Secretariat's work is clearly GAROP, rather than HelpAge International;
- Any line management, supervision and appraisal procedures that would be normal in HelpAge International are followed, but with an agreement on appropriate involvement of GAROP people; and any concerns arising over performance, overwork, etc are handled by the line manager within HelpAge International, but with the appropriate involvement of GAROP people.

Goodwill exists to ensure that this happens; this would be strengthened by GAROP and HelpAge International developing and signing a Memorandum of Understanding.

## **6. Resourcing**

For GAROP, income generation is not an option. Grant funding and contributions or fees from members are the alternatives.

## Grant funding

Options for grants from bilateral or foundation donors were explored during interviews. One or two options have been explored in the past without success, and most members are highly pessimistic about the prospects of this changing with a wider-ranging exploration.

This may be excessively pessimistic. The experience of other sectors advocating for changes at the UN is that while, initially, few options for funding may be available, once the process at the UN has reached a certain stage previously cautious donors become more positive. Further down the line, GAROP may well find suitable donors eager to support a campaign with momentum.

However, this presents a chicken-and-egg problem for the alliance. Resources may be available once momentum has been achieved; but resources are needed to deliver that momentum. The conclusion of this consultancy is that, at least initially, GAROP must be reliant on its own members for the finances to support a Secretariat and associated campaign costs.

This accords with the most common answer in the survey on resourcing: while only one respondent agreed that the campaign was important enough for the members to want and need to fund it entirely, 20 believed members should fund a core component, and then seek grants to build from there. 6 believed that it should be funded through grants, and were prepared to wait if this took some time. So most respondents expected the members to cover the core costs.

## Members providing the resources

In the survey, 6 members indicated they were willing to make a voluntary contribution, and a further 3 would do so if they were satisfied that the staffing and decision making have been appropriately set up. A further 11 would pay a membership fee if this were a condition of their involvement and it were set at a reasonable rate. Only 2 indicated that they would make no contribution under any circumstances.

So a significant proportion of responding members would be prepared to make a contribution of some sort, but if this is imposed there may be some (though slight) loss of membership.

In interviews, some of the larger members indicated a willingness to contribute significantly to costs, particularly if this were as part of an agreement between larger members (so that they have some confidence that their contribution would be matched by others). Some larger members indicated, however, that the convention was not a sufficiently high priority for them or their members; or said that, being grant-funding-dependent, they may have to build their contribution into funding proposals and await the outcome (one interviewee had already done so).

This suggests two approaches:

- A skype meeting between CEOs or senior staff of the larger organisations should be organised, to explore the potential for an agreement on making voluntary

contributions of significant size. This may have to allow for significant variation because of varied circumstances and degrees of priority for the convention, and should be open to commitments in kind as well as in dollars; but it would enable the conversation to take place at an appropriate level and can be expected to result in early indications of the size of budget within which employment of a Secretariat would need to function.

- While a membership fee as a condition of organisations' involvement would appear inappropriate – since the campaign needs as many willing organisations as possible on its side – it seems that a significant proportion of members would make some contribution if asked. So it is suggested that GAROP approaches members with a suggested contribution level, emphasising that (a) the campaign cannot run without incurring costs; (b) this is not compulsory; and (c) contributions exceeding the suggested amount would also be welcome.

Section 4 above suggested that the alliance needs three staff, and that this means a budget of around £200-250,000 sterling per year. For a campaign with a UN convention as its intended outcome, this is not expensive. However, generating this level of resourcing from the members may be challenging. Members – and the larger ones in particular – would need to recognise that if the Secretariat and related costs must be scaled back to accommodate a lower level of contribution, the alliance cannot be expected to be as efficient and effective as is probably needed.

## **7. Questions**

- 7.1 Is a balanced composition of the governing body, including some senior staff of the biggest contributors and some people (s)elected by the wider membership, an acceptable way forward?
- 7.2 Assuming that 6-10 is the ideal size of the governing body, which organisations should have a place as appointees, and how many should be drawn from the membership at large? For the latter, assuming election (to ensure ownership) is the desirable method of selection, is regional representation the best approach, or is there a better option?
- 7.3 What working groups are needed to ensure members have ownership of the practical delivery of the campaign and influencing work?
- 7.4 Does the mix of personnel and roles proposed here for the Secretariat reflect the needs of the alliance?
- 7.5 What should be included in a Memorandum of Understanding between HelpAge International and GAROP, to ensure that the Secretariat is run in the interests of GAROP as a whole, to protect and enhance the reputations of both, and to protect HelpAge International in the event of liabilities occurring?
- 7.6 Are there potential sources of grant funding that are more optimistic than the outlook presented in this paper? What are they, and how can they be secured?
- 7.7 Is the approach outlined in this paper for raising resources from members the best way of securing those resources?
- 7.8 What is a realistic budget, if core resources come only from members? Does this mean compromising the capacity of the alliance and campaign?