

HPN Pilot Phase Review Consultancy

Terms of Reference – October 26

Humanitarian Practice Network Pilot Phase Review and Partnership Learning Process

1. Background

Since 1994, HPN has provided an independent forum for humanitarian practitioners to share knowledge, analysis and experience. In 2024, HPN began shifting towards a partnership-based network that places the experience and priorities of national and local practitioners more firmly at the centre of its work.

The pilot has tested a different way of working: bringing practitioner networks into decisions about HPN's direction; co-creating knowledge products; supporting practitioners to publish in languages and formats that work for them; and connecting their experience to wider humanitarian policy and practice debates. HPN's principles and modus operandi set out commitments to mutual partnership, shared decision-making, independence, accessibility, equality, anti-racism and shifting power in knowledge production.

The initial 2025–2028 vision organised this transition around three connected areas: developing a decentralised partnership model; curating more inclusive and diverse knowledge products; and using multilingual and innovative communication channels to reach practitioners. Its design, innovate and grow phases envisaged a review of the partnership approach and team capacity before further expansion.

HPN has since established its Partnership Group and tested collaborative approaches through the Practitioners' Co-Creation Lab, multilingual publications, co-authorship and mentorship program, and partner-led exchanges. As the pilot approaches its next stage, HPN wishes to assess what has changed, where its model is working, and what needs to be adapted. This review will inform HPN's future strategy and provide a structured opportunity for partners to assess the partnership together.

2. Purpose

The consultancy will provide an independent, practical review of HPN's pilot phase and facilitate a collective partnership review with HPN's partners. It will assess whether HPN's current purpose, structure, ways of working and resources are fit for purpose in serving practitioner networks and supporting more equitable humanitarian knowledge exchange, and what should be changed in the next phase of its growth.

The review should generate clear choices for HPN and its partners, rather than only document activities completed. It should distinguish between commitments that have been delivered, those still being tested, and those that require revision in light of partner experience and available resources, and the rapid changing contexts and sector status.

3. Objectives

The consultant or consultancy team will:

1. **Assess progress against the pilot's original intentions**, using the 2024 principles and modus operandi, the 2025–2028 vision and the partnership model KPIs as starting points, while taking account of how the model has evolved.
2. **Examine the quality of partnership**, including partners' influence over strategy and decisions, the distribution of work and resources, mutual benefit, clarity of roles, and the accessibility of participation.
3. **Assess whether HPN is fit for purpose** for its intended practitioners and partners, including its added value, independence, governance, team

capacity, knowledge products, language provision, communications and ability to connect practitioner knowledge with policy and practice.

4. **Identify what should be retained, changed or discontinued** as HPN moves beyond the pilot, with feasible recommendations for the partnership model and the next strategic period.
5. **Design and facilitate a one-day partnership review meeting in Nairobi** that allows partners to examine the evidence, discuss difficult questions openly and shape the recommendations and future model.

4. Scope and key review questions

The review will cover the pilot period from the start of HPN's transition in 2024 to the point of data collection. It should consider both intended results and meaningful changes that were not anticipated in the original plans.

A. Purpose, relevance and added value

- Is HPN's purpose clear to partners, contributors and intended audiences? Does its current offer respond to the knowledge needs of national and local humanitarian practitioners?
- What does HPN enable that partners could not readily do through their own networks or other platforms?
- Is HPN reaching the practitioners, geographies and perspectives it intends to serve? Who remains underrepresented or faces barriers to participation?
- How well does HPN connect practitioner experience with research, policy discussions and changes in humanitarian practice?

B. Partnership model and power sharing

- How and to what extent have partners influenced HPN's strategic direction, thematic priorities, products and activities?
- Are roles, decision rights, expectations and routes for raising concerns understood by HPN and its partners, given that the pilot phase has been launched one year and a half ago?

- How equitable are partners' opportunities to participate, lead and benefit, given differences in size, capacity, language, geography and available time?
- How have financial support, authorship, credit, editorial processes and other forms of support affected the partnership?

C. Knowledge production and exchange

- To what extent have partners and local practitioners shaped and led HPN's outputs, including the selection of topics and formats?
- Are HPN's editorial and co-creation processes accessible, useful and fair to contributors? What support has been most valuable, and where are the burdens or bottlenecks?
- Are products and exchanges relevant to practitioners' concerns, and what evidence is there that they are read, shared, discussed or used?
- How well are the Practitioners' Co-Creation Lab and co-authorship and mentorship approaches working? Are the current formats and production timelines sustainable?

D. Access, language and communications

- How effectively has HPN supported original contributions and exchange across languages, rather than relying only on translation after publication?
- Which languages, channels and formats are reaching intended audiences, and where are the gaps?
- How useful are HPN's website, events, partner channels and other communications in enabling exchange among practitioners?
- What should HPN prioritise as its digital and communications work develops, including any use of technology that affects accessibility, quality or trust?

E. Organisational capacity and sustainability

- Are HPN's staffing, skills, systems, budgets and decision processes adequate for the current partnership model and proposed growth?

- Which activities depend on informal effort or resources that cannot reasonably be sustained?
- What trade-offs should HPN make between expanding the Partnership Group, producing knowledge, supporting partners and convening exchanges?
- What proportionate measures would allow HPN and its partners to judge progress and adapt their approach in the next phase?

The consultant should assess the original KPIs, including partner influence and participation, co-created outputs, geographic and thematic diversity, original non-English outputs, reach and perceived relevance. The review should test whether these measures are meaningful and verifiable; it should not treat an unmet target as a complete explanation of performance or assume that all original targets remain appropriate.

5. Approach and methodology

The consultant will propose a proportionate, participatory methodology in the inception report. It is expected to include:

- A desk review of the founding pilot documents, KPI framework, relevant strategies and plans, Partnership Group and Advisory Group records, budgets or resource arrangements, selected outputs, audience data, and previous partner feedback.
- Confidential interviews or small-group discussions with all willing Partnership Group members, HPN staff, relevant HPG colleagues, Advisory Group members and a purposeful sample of contributors and intended users beyond the formal partnership.
- A review of a sample of knowledge products and collaborations to trace how topics were chosen, who made decisions, what support and resources were provided, and how the outputs were shared or used.
- Analysis of the available KPI evidence, identifying data gaps and explaining the limits of any conclusions.
- A short synthesis of emerging findings circulated before the Nairobi meeting, with accessible ways for partners who cannot attend to contribute.

- Design and facilitation of the one-day Nairobi meeting, followed by integration of partners' feedback into the final analysis and recommendations.

The approach should make space for candid feedback. HPN staff should not be present for every partner discussion, and individual comments should not be attributed without consent. The consultant should offer language support or suitable alternatives where needed so that participation does not depend solely on comfort with English.

6. Nairobi partnership review meeting

The consultant will design and facilitate a **one-day, in-person meeting with HPN partners in Nairobi, as part of a Knowledge Exchange Week**. The meeting is a core part of the review, not simply an event to present completed findings. Its design should allow partners to challenge the consultant's emerging analysis and contribute to decisions about HPN's next phase.

The consultant will agree the final agenda with HPN after the initial interviews. The meeting should include:

1. **A shared account of the pilot:** What HPN set out to test, what has happened, and where evidence or experiences differ.
2. **A partnership reflection:** What has enabled genuine influence and mutual benefit; what has created friction, unequal workloads or unclear expectations.
3. **A fit-for-purpose discussion:** Whether HPN's current offer, governance, knowledge products and ways of working meet partners' needs and the needs of practitioners they represent.
4. **Future model choices:** Structured discussion of the Partnership Group's role and composition, decision-making, partner support and payments, priority activities and realistic pace of growth.
5. **Agreed priorities:** The changes partners consider most important, areas requiring further decision, and how partners wish to remain involved in shaping the next phase.

The facilitation should use a mix of small-group work, plenary discussion and individual input. It should avoid requiring partners to reach a false consensus: the record should capture points of agreement, differing views and unresolved choices. The consultant will prepare an agenda, facilitation guide and accessible pre-read, and will document the meeting's conclusions. HPN will arrange participant invitations and event logistics in coordination with the consultant or team of consultants.

6. Deliverables and indicative schedule

Deliverables	Details	Indicative Schedule
Inception Report	Report including the approach of the consultancy, sampling document and data request, interview plan and detailed timeline	Week 1
Desk Review	Review process of HPN Pilot phase vision, KPI plan, Values and MO and real-time workplan implemented; in addition to a context analysis of HPN functioning	Week 2
Interview process	KIIs and/or FGDs with HPG staff, HPN Management and other stakeholders	Week 3-6
Preparation for the Nairobi Partners Review	Design of a one day agenda and pre-post activities to gather information from partners, including objectives and use of information in review	Week 7-8
Draft Review Report and Feedback process	Delivery of initial assessment and roadmap on different components of the vision (outputs, partnerships, other) Feedback process including partners and internal group	Week 9-11

Final Report	Presentation of the final review report including a clear roadmap for the next HPN growth phase and presentation of findings	Week 12-13
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The assignment is expected to require **approximately 25 working days**, including attending the partnership review meeting in Nairobi, Kenya in February 2027 and taking into consideration the end of year break.

9. Required experience

The assignment may be undertaken by an individual consultant or a team of consultants. The selected consultant or team should collectively demonstrate:

- Experience reviewing organisational change, networks, partnerships or collaborative programmes in the humanitarian or development sector.
- Strong understanding of locally led humanitarian action, power dynamics in partnerships and equitable knowledge production.
- Experience designing and facilitating participatory discussions across organisations with different roles, resources and perspectives.
- Ability to combine qualitative evidence with proportionate analysis of monitoring and audience data, and to make practical recommendations under resource constraints.
- Experience working with multilingual, cross-regional groups and handling sensitive feedback with independence and care.
- Excellent written and spoken English. Professional working proficiency in Arabic and/or Swahili would be an asset; applicants should explain how they would support meaningful participation across relevant languages.

11. Proposal requirements

Interested consultants or teams should submit to s.abikhalil@odi.org while CCing hpn@odi.org and s.moore@odi.org before the **22nd of October 2026**.

- A brief technical proposal describing their understanding of the assignment, methodology, approach to partner participation and proposed Nairobi meeting design.
- A workplan and allocation of days by team member.
- CVs and relevant examples of comparable reviews or facilitated processes.
- A financial proposal showing professional fees, travel and any proposed interpretation or translation costs separately.
- Availability for the anticipated review period and Nairobi meeting.