

Executive Summary:

Mid-Term Review of Habitat for Humanity's Solid Ground Campaign

STEPHEN TIBBETT, JIM COE, MARTIN CLARK, ELENA LUCCHI

APRIL 2018

The review parameters

This review's main **purpose** is to inform future advocacy campaigning efforts. Within this, the intention was both to learn lessons from the first part of the Solid Ground campaign in order to improve the effectiveness of the latter 'half' of the campaign and also to inform and improve the effectiveness of future Habitat for Humanity advocacy campaigning efforts. A subsidiary purpose of the review is to understand the progress that has been made by the campaign against its objectives.

The review's **objectives** are to understand whether and to what extent the campaign model and strategy is proving to be effective so far, to discern a series of actionable recommendations that would strengthen the campaign model and other comparable campaigns or advocacy efforts in the future and to assess the progress the campaign has made against its objectives to date.

The review used a number of key data and evidence sources. These included a literature review which sought to analyze existing information and develop an understanding of the underlying rationale for the campaign; an online survey of Habitat for Humanity staff (with a response rate of 31%), designed to garner the views of the widest number of respondents and get a sense of the campaign as a whole; and 75 semi-structured and non-attributable interviews with relevant stakeholders, primarily selected staff, but also some external stakeholders. In order to gain a greater in-depth knowledge of national advocacy, the review conducted four small-scale case studies in Brazil, Hungary, Cote d'Ivoire and Cambodia.

The Solid Ground campaign

The Solid Ground campaign is Habitat for Humanity's **first international advocacy campaign**. It was launched in March 2016 as a three-year campaign and focuses on access to land. Its external goal is to reform and enforce implementation of international, multinational, national, and local policy to improve access to land for shelter for 10 million people. The campaign aims to make progress across five objectives: global campaign coordination; network capacity building for local and national policy change; positioning for international influence; resource mobilization and increasing public support for access to land for shelter.

Campaign activity at the National organization level is lightly coordinated and supported. Participation in the campaign at national level is voluntary and those national organizations that do choose to participate can enroll at three levels of contribution: "champion", "amplifier" and "enthusiast". Some countries have accessed funding to support the campaign from Challenge Grants, which are year-long grants allocated to countries that commit to certain levels of campaign activity and ambition. There are currently 37 countries enrolled in the campaign.

The campaign has also been active at regional and international levels. At the international level the campaign has a number of formal partners and has been focused on influencing international agreements and frameworks relevant to land reform, shelter, and housing, including the New Urban Agenda in the United Nations Habitat III process, and the UN process to define and agree the Sustainable Development Goals. In the former, the organization worked through additional partnership platforms, co-leading the Housing Policy Unit for Habitat III, and the CSO Group of the General Assembly of Partners, also participating in the Global Land Indicators Initiative.

Findings: The campaign model and approach

The campaign model is highly flexible in that there is broad scope to work on themes that are nationally relevant. This model is both **appropriate** to Habitat's context and **widely supported** by staff. The flexibility it allows is seen as well suited to the organizational structure and culture, and has been important for buy-in, especially in national organizations. This flexibility comes with its own limits, however, especially in terms of coherence of direction and clarity of purpose.

Whilst there is strong organizational **support for the concept of advocacy campaigning**, there are still some remaining questions about the meaning and breadth of advocacy campaigning, and its relation to broader strategy.

There was widespread general agreement that the campaign has **focused on the right issue** and, within that, mostly the right themes, within a broad and flexible outline. The issue of access to land, however, is widely acknowledged as often politically challenging and complex.

The way the campaign model was **designed and structured** is widely praised for making the best from limited resources, allowing local flexibility, and campaign design. Some campaign participants feel that the structure could now be re-balanced to support more direction and coherence.

The **non-confrontational advocacy approach** that Habitat has adopted is largely suited to the organizational culture and plays to Habitat's organizational strengths, but there may be some scope for being a bit bolder.

Reporting systems are relatively undemanding, whilst fulfilling requirements of senior leaders and the Board. However, overall, monitoring and reporting processes are not providing a full picture of campaign progress and challenges, making it difficult for staff at some levels to understand progress or refine strategy.

The **Global Metrics Tool (GMT)** is the organizational mechanism for providing consolidated progress data, including in the advocacy campaigning arena. There is skepticism at various levels about whether the GMT data provides a true and useful picture of advocacy progress. There is a global campaign target "to improve housing access to shelter for 10 million people" but it's difficult to tell from the GMT data alone whether the campaign is on track to reach it, given that it's not realistic to expect to see linear progression in the numbers relating to advocacy outcomes. Other national reporting is generating some information, but not across all countries involved in the campaign. There may be scope to introduce some light, joint reporting requirements against common campaign objectives.

Findings: Campaign objectives and outcomes

Global coordination is generally working well, despite the limits of capacity and the constraints of the campaign model. The campaigns team is highly and widely praised for its role, despite being under-resourced. The team's internal communications about both global and national level issues are well regarded. Some successful **global-national collaboration** has occurred but has been somewhat limited.

Although the campaign can rely on senior **support and wide rhetorical backing**, there have been some limits to **cross-organizational work** through the campaign. Overall, with few exceptions, the participation of the communications functions in the campaign is described as disappointing. In contrast, despite some challenges, fundraising teams seem to have bought into, and—in most cases—are enthusiastic about, the campaign. The degree to which the campaign is aligned with Habitat's programs depends on the country and region. There has been alignment and co-working in many countries, even if the two disciplines tend to come from divergent perspectives.

There are some good examples of strong **partnerships**, and positive partnership work. There is scope to strengthen links and working arrangements with existing partners and to think more strategically and expansively about who to link with and how.

National organizations are generally content with the quality, if not the quantity, of the **support** they have been receiving. **Challenge Grants** have been highly successful in kick-starting the campaign,

ensuring countries are on board and participating, and in gaining and sustaining momentum, although there were some suggestions that grants could be more strategically used.

There has also been good progress, but there are still gaps—to be expected at this stage in the organizational journey—in the network’s overall **capacity** to undertake effective advocacy campaigning.

Staff strongly believe there has been positive progress in Habitat’s **positioning for influence** and reputation as a credible advocacy actor as a result of the campaign.

Funding leveraged to support the campaign is reported to have been significant, but it is difficult to be precise about the extent to which this represents “new money”.

Public support for access to land is a campaign objective about which there is little definitive information, but overall it is difficult to be confident that there has been significant progress in this area. This in the context that there are only a few examples where the campaign has involved more **public campaigning**, including in some cases through community mobilization approaches. A clearer organizational strategy on public participation and campaigning might be helpful.

There have been good levels of progress in **building internal support** for advocacy campaigning and there are good levels of internal support for the campaign. Whilst this represents good progress in a short amount of time, the concern for the future is that so far this support has only translated to somewhat mixed active engagement with the campaign, and there are some doubts about how deeply support is embedded across the network, at the leadership level of some national organizations for example.

There are examples of **policy and practice changes** internationally, regionally, and nationally, but unsurprisingly at this relatively early stage, these are not widely reported. In many countries, changing policy is not so much the issue as ensuring implementation of existing policy.

Looking ahead & recommendations

Interviewees were asked **how Solid Ground should end**. Respondents from different perspectives strongly expressed the view that the campaign shouldn’t end precipitously, on the basis that some countries are just getting started and also that change takes time and the issue of access to land is not one that is going to get resolved soon. Looking to the long term, there’s clearly an appetite to continue with “advocacy as part of Habitat’s DNA” and enhance Habitat’s capacities to campaign effectively in a changing world.

Recommendation 1. Pause and revisit the expectation that the Solid Ground campaign will end next year and develop a more graduated exit/transition strategy and timetable

The campaigns team should convene a global group of stakeholders to plot out exit and transition strategies for the campaign, exploring a range of options but from the starting point that the current end date should not be held to.

Recommendation 2. Balance national flexibility with a tighter overarching structure

There’s a clear need to maintain the existing national thematic flexibility, respecting vastly different contexts, but this could be maintained whilst developing an overall international structure that makes the whole greater than the sum of its parts with more global connectivity integrating communications and advocacy. This balance could be better achieved by:

2.1. Developing common objectives

The current five campaign objectives are relevant to Habitat for Humanity International. Articulating a set of objectives for the network as a whole, to which all participating parts of Habitat contribute as appropriate according to context, would lock in a sense of common purpose across the network and give a framework for planning and reporting.

2.2. Exploring regional synergies

A regional—or sub-regional—approach, where appropriate, could support local coherence and synergies with countries facing similar challenges (and perhaps opportunities with existing regional political and

civil society structures). Such an approach, which need not be adopted everywhere, implies a role for the Regional Offices with related questions of resources and capacities.

2.3. Developing More globally interconnected activity

Identify more moments for the network to come together around international events or self-generated moments to focus on sub-themes with opportunities for public work and international solidarity.

Recommendation 3. Clearer global prioritization

The campaign should develop and communicate a clearer global prioritization strategy. For example, should the focus be on the places where there is biggest chance of success for the most people, or supporting the most vulnerable communities, or developing pilot examples which could be adopted later elsewhere? This need not constrain national participation but would inform the focus for international support, including through Challenge Grants.

Recommendation 4. Enhance the integrated central campaign team with research and policy development roles

The current team is working well but could be further enhanced, through expanding roles that could be coordination-focused rather than always being expected to provide core research and policy development but would provide a central point of contact and coordination with other parts of the organization.

Recommendation 5. Broaden international campaign leadership to national organizations

Global representation could be complemented by some staff from national organizations playing a more central role in aspects of campaign management and implementation. A Global Strategy Group from across Habitat, for example, should support buy-in and ensure campaigns are located in the reality of those expected to deliver, critical for the considerations outlined in Recommendation 1.

Recommendation 6. More proactive internal communication and coordination of areas for collaboration

Current internal communications were highly praised. There is, however, room for more proactively identifying and communicating potential areas for collaboration between national organizations facing similar challenges or working towards common objectives.

Recommendation 7. Resource a clarified role for Regional Offices

Regional Office support for advocacy is generally well received. However, it is unclear to what extent regional advocacy staff should focus on support to national organizations' advocacy, and/or developing and implementing regional-level advocacy, and/or facilitating horizontal working. Practice currently varies across the regions. Additional capacity for regional capacity-building on advocacy involving regional and national staff is needed, but also clearer terms of reference for regional advocacy staff, noting that the balance may not need to be the same in all regions.

Recommendation 8. Enhance opportunities for peer-to-peer and other learning and support

There is a widespread desire for more learning opportunities and peer-to-peer sharing, from facilitating national organizations' sharing ideas and experiences in different advocacy approaches, to building the capacity of national organizations' staff through exchange programs and trainings.

Recommendation 9. Deliver a stronger signal from senior leadership for more and better cross-disciplinary working

Senior leaders should proactively signal that Solid Ground is an important organizational priority and has cross-organizational benefits and that all departments—including communications—are appropriately engaged in the task of supporting the campaign. Care should, however, be taken that organizational buy-in and cross-disciplinary working don't come at the undue expense of agility and other transaction costs.

Recommendation 10. Sharpen strategic analysis to better position Habitat for Humanity for influence on policy and policy implementation

There is room for deeper analysis of the areas in which Habitat can provide leverage through increasing expertise and identifying specific policy recommendations and strategies on policy implementation.

Recommendation 11. Develop strategy to enhance public campaigning

There is a desire for the next phase of Solid Ground, and future campaigns, to be more public-facing. Future strategy should give consideration to a sometimes more challenging approach to advocacy campaigning alongside other aspects of campaign communications, from the role of digital to the identification and use of high-profile supporters and public events. Expanding the public side of the campaign requires addressing internal challenges regarding resources and organizational communications support to the campaign.

11.1. Revisit objective on public support

Greater clarity is needed on *what* Habitat is trying to achieve in regard to public support and *why*, to inform further considerations of *how* it might be delivered.

11.2. Identify an opportunity for an international communications push

This should perhaps mark the next phase of the campaign, to give a global perspective on access to land and generate a sense of urgency about the work remaining to “move the needle” internationally. This could also provide an opportunity to communicate the extent to which advocacy is part of Habitat’s brand.

Recommendation 12. Develop the role of volunteers as campaigners

There are opportunities to develop the role of volunteers in the campaign, through strengthening joint working between relevant teams and investing in developing ideas and materials to support volunteers’ engagement.

Recommendation 13. Consider sharing and developing models for community engagement

There are examples of interesting community engagement work, for example in Brazil and elsewhere, which can be shared and developed in other settings. As well as providing legitimacy to the campaign through being grounded in the agency of those directly affected, such engagement may be important in ensuring sustainability for the future.

Recommendation 14. Develop models for partnership working

Internationally, there is need for greater clarity on the relationship of partners to the campaign and mutual expectations. Nationally, partnership working is under-developed in places. A clearer articulation of the role of partners at all levels with examples of good practice would be useful. There are opportunities at all levels through joint working to take the campaign to new audiences, and to bring capacities from policy analysis to community engagement that may otherwise be missing.

Recommendation 15. Increase core funding to the campaign

The campaign is currently under-resourced and many of the recommendations made through this review are not cost-neutral. Campaigns need to balance objectives, activities, and resources. If further resources are not available, expectations need to be scaled back in terms of the objectives set and the activities undertaken. Ideally, the campaign should not be expected to be funded through restricted funds only.

Policy and research capacity is a major gap. Discrete funding should ideally be made available for enhancing policy capacity at all levels.

Recommendation 16. Review capacity-building support to national organizations and institute a plan to take this forward

More support was identified as a need, in particular for staff new to advocacy but should also be looked at in terms of ongoing development for all involved. Areas for attention include both technical and political, in the capacity to understand and analyze the issues being dealt with and the skills to translate that into effective advocacy. Such support can (as suggested above) be through facilitating peer-to-peer

support, rather than directly from the center, but probably also needs to look at ongoing packages of support and not just one-off interventions.

Recommendation 17. Enhance challenge grants towards sustainable capacity

Multi-year Challenge Grants should be considered to allow for the time taken for advocacy and the need to plan ahead. More attention may also need to be given to how these grants can be used to leverage further funding nationally and internationally. A tighter model of global prioritization as suggested above should support transparent decisions as to where such support is given.

Recommendation 18. Establish a light but common reporting format for use across all enrolled national organizations to supplement the GMT monitoring data

The current GMT reporting system is focused on numeric measures and therefore privileges the idea that advocacy-led change can be quantified and its progress can be calculated over time. However, changing people's lives through advocacy involves complex processes that don't easily fit into such systems. It would be good to supplement the GMT monitoring with common narrative reporting. This could dovetail with Challenge Grant reporting and be based around a set of simple questions, building from the existing "Advocacy Success" template example that one region has adopted. As appropriate, this information could be synthesized and distilled and presented alongside the GMT data.

Recommendation 19. Participating national organizations to report against Solid Ground objectives

Beyond the GMT metrics, it is currently difficult to track progress in participating countries which are not Challenge Grant recipients. It is earlier suggested that common objectives should be developed across the organization, which can be reported against. At the least, all enrolled countries should be expected to develop and share national objectives and report related progress.

Recommendation 20. Develop an overarching organizational advocacy campaigning strategy

Many of the areas above could perhaps best be seen and addressed through discussing an overarching strategy for advocacy campaigning in Habitat and its role in delivering the Strategic Plan. Such considerations should encompass: The development of policy; a clearer line on positioning and the degree of comfort with confrontational approaches; the relationship of advocacy with program priorities; global prioritization and what that means for support to national organizations; a model for partnerships and coalitions internationally and nationally; the place of public-facing campaigning and communications; links with affected communities; and the role of volunteers. In addition, future campaigns should prioritize achieving more clearly defined external outcomes and campaigns should be designed and resources prioritized accordingly.