

MAKE POVERTY HISTORY

2005 Campaign Evaluation

Executive Summary

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Prepared for the **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY** Coordination Team.

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Any comments regarding this report can be sent to the evaluation team by email at evaluation2005@firetail.co.uk.



Executive Summary

Overview

2005 was a significant moment for development campaigning. The UK presidencies of the EU and G8, as well as UN meetings and WTO negotiations presented a unique opportunity to make progress in the campaign against global poverty.

MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY was established as a coalition to make the most of this opportunity. Launched in January 2005, it grew to 540 members representing most sections of UK civil society. Its objectives were to:

- Achieve policy change in 2005 in the areas of more and better aid, debt relief and trade justice
- Create an unstoppable momentum for change in 2005
- Leave the public committed to further change beyond 2005

This evaluation assesses the impact of the campaign and how successful it was in meeting these objectives.

The public mobilisation was felt to be the greatest achievement of the campaign.

MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY not only managed to make almost everyone in the country aware of the campaign, it inspired a significant proportion to participate – many for the first time. Church and faith groups provided an important bridge between traditional activists and first-time campaigners.

As a political and parliamentary lobby, the campaign dominated the year. There was massive support for the campaign from politicians of all parties.

In terms of policy change, it was felt that the campaign could point to real achievements on aid and debt. On trade, there was felt to have been little practical success, although the very fact that trade and development were linked together was felt to be an important step in building an international consensus. The changes in rhetoric within the EU (especially within DG Trade) were felt to be evidence of this, though there was institutionally little change.

The effectiveness of the coalition was thought to be the combination of:

- The fact that coalition members committed to work together
- The popular communications. This included the brand, the portfolio of tools used, media coverage, celebrity support, Live8 and the Edinburgh rally
- The policy research and lobbying that supported the communications

Many of the things that made a difference were popular, mass-market campaigning approaches. Where these things were less in evidence, external interviews suggested that there was less of an impact.

In light of these successes, four areas were identified where the coalition had faced

challenges. Although worth further debate, interviewees felt that they had to be placed in their proper context. Issues raised were:

- The impact of the **leadership model**. Whilst this was felt to be vital to holding the coalition together, it led to slow and reactive decision-making
- The challenge of **co-ordinating responses** in a broad coalition. This was difficult because of the lack of a central spokesperson, but also because of differences within the coalition on how to communicate progress and engage with government
- The extent to which **public momentum** could be sustained and the work needed to maintain these levels of interest
- The extent to which the coalition was seen as **a British campaign**, rather than an international campaign. In the run-up to the G8 Summit at Gleneagles, Live8 is felt to have had significant influence with other G8 governments

Local campaigners were most impressed with the public awareness achieved by the campaign. They felt that this, alongside the brand and unity of the coalition, gave them a catalyst to work together locally. However, because they are so pleased with what was achieved, they are concerned about next steps and public momentum. Many felt that the major agencies were responsible for these issues and should work hard to preserve the legacy of the campaign.

The campaign was deliberately established with a highly decentralised and consensual management structure. Regardless of any perceived imperfections, the general consensus was that the ways of working delivered results.

Internally, the ways of working were thought to have been effective at promoting coalition unity, mobilising supporters and harnessing the energy of the members. By allowing the campaign to run a broad portfolio of complementary activities, they contributed to the coalition's objectives.

The ways of working were less effective at resolving tension and taking strategic decisions. The ad-hoc structure placed heavy demands on those involved centrally. As a result, although members recognise the importance of coalition working, many are reluctant to commit to future coalitions without conditions attached.

Internal and external interviews point to some common themes. These have been translated into six broad lessons learned.

The campaign brought the issues of international development into the mainstream of UK politics. The challenge for coalition members is to consolidate the achievements of 2005, both in the UK and internationally, as a platform for a global campaign.

Lessons learned:

This evaluation draws six lessons from 2005. To put them in context, one special advisor said:

“Most lessons to take from the year are definitely positive. The question is how you can maintain this momentum now you’re in a different era.”

Future coalitions will be more successful if they develop a view about these issues at an early stage:

Leadership

- Coalitions need to understand the trade-offs between leadership and consensus

Planning

- Planning strategically – for the long term - is different from tactically responding to external conditions. Coalitions need to do both

Working with different types of organisation

- Different organisations have different needs. As coalitions grow, they need to accommodate diversity

Agreeing public and political positioning

- Campaigns need to agree their strategy on overall public and political positioning at the outset, or at least agree how to manage differences between members

Using popular communications tools

- Mass-market popular communications, backed up by solid lobbying and traditional activism, have significant political impact

Building relationships with supporters

- Campaigns need to plan to take new supporters on a journey from interest to activism

Next Steps:

2005 was an unprecedented public mobilisation that achieved real policy change. Whilst the campaign was only ever established as a one-year mobilisation, all involved recognise that meeting the challenge of global poverty requires a sustained, long-term and global effort.

The campaign has already taken a number of decisions about the future. It was decided at the final Assembly meeting that the core networks would form the heart of future campaigning on economic justice issues. Member agencies and individuals would be encouraged to join the relevant campaigning organisations and networks. BOND (British Overseas NGOs for Development) would manage the UK representation on GCAP (the Global Call to Action against Poverty) and Assembly members may continue to use the brand, within agreed guidelines.

During the evaluation process, interviewees were asked what they thought the highest priorities were for future work. In most cases, these views were given without knowing the actual plans that were in place. In general, there was huge support for the campaign and a view that it could and should sustain a popular, broad based campaign about global poverty.

Recommendations for next steps came under two headings:

- i) Consolidate the achievements of 2005
- ii) Use 2005 as a platform

Consolidate the achievements of 2005:

- **Retain the coherence of the coalition.** In terms of lobbying MPs, motivating the public and galvanising local campaigners, the co-ordinated communications and coalition working made a significant difference. The coalition members should retain as much coherence as they can and commit to retain elements of co-ordination, strategic planning and communications.
- **Keep pressure on the UK government.** The promises of Gleneagles need to be held to account. The government should be challenged to recognise that in an interdependent world, there are policy issues in every government department that have an impact on development.
- **Keep communicating with the public, especially the newly engaged.** The public mobilisation had a significant impact on both the UK and international governments and demonstrated a clear public enthusiasm for these issues. The campaign needs to build a lasting relationship with the public, communicating to them the impact of their involvement and the benefits of continued involvement. Coalition members need to embrace continued use of popular communications tools and build those skills into their organisations.

Use 2005 as a platform:

- **Take forward the debate on trade.** Campaigning on trade issues is fundamentally harder than campaigning for aid and debt relief. The arguments have not been

won, outcomes are hard to judge and progress relies on slow-moving, multilateral institutions. The campaign needs to push for a consensus on trade issues, with a clear programme of action and a co-ordinated campaign of international lobbying.

- **Put pressure on G8 and EU countries.** Sustaining pressure on the UK without also pressuring other governments will not yield many further dividends. Coalition members need to work out how to best influence international governments and institutions and work towards an international consensus for reform.
- **Help support Southern civil society.** Building ownership of these issues in the South will have two impacts. It will increase pressure on Southern governments (particularly in Africa) to commit to development and it will increase the legitimacy of the arguments if they are owned and supported by the South. GCAP is understood to be building towards this. However whilst this might be a desirable outcome, some resisted this as next step for the UK, because it implied that it was the role of the UK to create Southern actions.