

## A conversation with Tom Hart on April 24, 2014

### Participants

- Tom Hart, U.S. Executive Director, the ONE Campaign
- Holden Karnofsky, Co-Executive Director, GiveWell

**Note:** These notes were compiled by GiveWell and give an overview of the major points made by Tom Hart.

### Summary

GiveWell spoke to Tom Hart to learn more about opportunities for philanthropy in foreign aid advocacy. Conversation topics included ONE's development, advocacy tools, working with outside lobbying and consulting firms, funding needs, and thoughts on other organizations in this space.

### ONE's development

ONE originated ten years ago as DATA, a small organization founded by Bono, Bobby Shriver and others, with start-up funders including Ed Scott, Bill and Melinda Gates, and George Soros. In the beginning, ONE focused heavily on developing its lobbying capacity, which involved gathering intelligence and building relationships with key political players. Later, ONE began investing more in grassroots mobilization, which is cost-intensive to develop and maintain. It also began investing in coalition building.

ONE has grown and developed fairly organically and incrementally rather than going through any particular sudden expansion of its scope.

Prior to working for ONE/DATA, Mr. Hart was Director of Government Relations for Episcopal Church, USA; prior to that he was an aide to Senators Alan Cranston and Jay Rockefeller.

### Advocacy tools

ONE advocates for policies to end extreme poverty and preventable disease. Because foreign aid and anti-poverty initiatives do not have a strong domestic constituency, the burden of proof is often seen as being on ONE to demonstrate to policymakers that its policy goals have widespread support. To accomplish this, ONE uses a variety of tools, including:

- **Lobbying:** ONE's bipartisan lobbying team is equally split between Republicans and Democrats, which helps the team communicate effectively with a range of politicians.
- **Grassroots mobilization:** Grassroots mobilization is critical for generating

attention and pressure around ONE's policy goals and is one of ONE's main means of pushing for legislation. ONE has field operations in all 50 states, which are managed by regional directors and rely heavily on volunteers. When necessary, it can mobilize tens of thousands of letters and calls to Capitol Hill in a day, which can have a large impact on legislative outcomes.

- **Campus outreach:** ONE has over one hundred university chapters.
- **Policy analysis:** ONE's policy department supports its advocacy, with reports on focus areas (health, agriculture, transparency) and factual support for policy positions.
- **Communications:** This includes advertising, developing the organization's brand, and bringing media attention to its issues.
- **Coalition building:** ONE uses its Strategic Relationships team to help build relationships with influential people (e.g. politicians such as Mike Huckabee and Tom Daschle, religious figures such as pastor Rick Warren, media personalities, CEOs) and to encourage them to support ONE's policy goals. ONE has found it particularly effective to build coalitions of people who hold different political views and are rarely seen working together.
- **Engaging faith communities:** Faith communities are natural allies to anti-poverty movements because of their commitment to helping the poor. Engaging faith communities is especially important for gaining support from conservatives. ONE has built good relationships with local and national faith leaders by being transparent about its policy goals and sensitive to the positions of its various partners.
- **Celebrity engagement:** ONE engages with artists and celebrities. For example, a recent campaign at the University of Southern California featured the Grammy-nominated musician Akon.
- **Online engagement:** ONE operates social media campaigns and has a large online membership base of two million members in the U.S. and nearly four million globally.

## Deciding what tools to use

ONE makes decisions about which advocacy tools to use in a given situation based largely on whom it is trying to influence. The most frequently used tools are lobbying and grassroots mobilization. In almost every case, the lobbying team plays an important role in identifying key players and deciding which advocacy tools should be deployed. Sponsors also help decide what tools to use by identifying, for example, opportunities where grassroots mobilization or direct lobbying could be especially impactful.

## Working with outside lobbyists

Outside lobbying firms supplement the work done by ONE's staff by providing additional political intelligence and contacts and, to a lesser extent, assisting with strategy. Early on, ONE relied heavily on outside lobbying firms. It has built an in-house team over the last few years but continues to work with, for example, the Sheridan Group on the Democratic side

and Peck Madigan Jones on the Republican side. While ONE's in-house team has excellent relationships with key political players, outside firms supplement and expand its network, particularly through political or party connections.

## **Funding**

ONE is financially supported primarily from its board and a small group of outside sources to maintain its work. The organization is looking to diversify its sources. With more funding, ONE could expand its campus program in the US, for example by forming a youth corps of recent college graduates to manage campus organizing. Hiring four people to do this work would cost about \$200K. Growing its campus program would help ONE gain support from policymakers, many of whom are interested in attracting young people, particularly students. Generally speaking, the success of grassroots organizing is directly related to the size of the operation, which is directly related to the amount of funding it has available. Campus organizing is particularly difficult because a large portion of the population turns over at the end of every year. There are many other programs in the US and abroad ONE could expand or begin with additional funding.

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