



Collaborations, Connections and Communities: The Global Community-Led Housing Programme

Briefing Paper: Policy, Land and Finance

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About World Habitat

World Habitat is an independent charity which aims to fight global housing poverty. Through its three main programme areas – Community-Led Housing, Homelessness and the World Habitat Awards – the charity aims to solve housing issues around the world by sharing ideas which work. The charity was originally named Building and Social Housing Foundation. World Habitat, based in Leicester, UK, is recognised by the Department of Public Information of the United Nations. Since 2006 the charity has held Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, reflecting its work in support of the goals of UN-HABITAT.

About the Author

Dr Tom Moore is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Geography & Planning at the University of Liverpool. He has research interests in housing studies and community planning and has published widely on the formation, development and impacts of community-led housing globally. His related publications in this area can be [found here](#). Tom is the Programme Director of the University of Liverpool's MA in Housing & Community Planning.



About the GCLH Programme

Community-led housing approaches are growing in global importance and prominence, tackling problems associated with housing affordability, inequities in land ownership, and community disempowerment in the management and ownership of housing and land. Beginning in 2018, World Habitat's Global Community-Led Housing (GCLH) Programme has supported the promotion and development of community-led housing internationally. In particular, the Programme has sought to target parts of the world where community-led housing is less developed and to support the exchange of ideas, solutions and good practice between these locations and areas where community-led housing may be more established.

To deliver on this, World Habitat committed to a series of partnerships, actions and interventions, including the development of peer-to-peer networks and partnerships, support for the creation and development of learning tools and resources, and direct financial support to community-led housing advocates and organisations. The overall purpose of these interventions was to enhance knowledge and understanding of community-led housing, to develop and impact upon policy for community-led housing, and to enhance conditions for the acquisition of land and finance.


This briefing paper presents findings from qualitative research conducted with 18 individuals representing collaborators and participants in the Global Community-Led Housing Programme. The organisations collaborating in the Programme represented a mix of new and emerging community-led housing initiatives and more established groups and advocates. Interviews were conducted between September and December 2021. The purpose of the research was to explore the impacts and outcomes of the Programme, the extent to which the Programme's objectives were delivered upon, and priorities for future refinement of Programme objectives and implementation.

The themes of this paper are Policy, Land and Finance. An additional briefing paper on Knowledge and Transnational Collaboration is also available.

Introduction and background

It is established that the progression of community-led housing projects benefits from forms of finance at all stages, including for early stage concept development and community engagement, planning, building skills and capacity, and eventual acquisition and ownership of land and housing¹. In addition to facilitating knowledge exchanges, World Habitat's GCLH Programme provided funding to specific groups and projects to enhance and develop their organisational capacities and to support them in attempts to influence policy, leverage additional funding, and to acquire land. The impacts and benefits derived from this support are discussed below, with reference to the value and

¹ Archer, T, Moore, T, Mullins, D and Arbell, Y. (2021) Homes in Community Hands: Year Two Evaluation Report. Published by Power to Change. Available online: <https://www4.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/sites/shu.ac.uk/files/homes-in-community-hands-year2-eval-report.pdf>

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importance of funding to grantees and emerging impacts on policy conditions and access to resources.

The importance of grants provided by World Habitat

Funding provided by World Habitat could be categorised as early stage financing, generally received by organisations exploring the applicability of community-led housing in contexts where such models are less familiar and those that seek to raise awareness of community-led housing to broader audiences. Grant recipients included advocacy organisations that support capacity-building and awareness raising with community groups and that lobby policymakers, community-led housing groups seeking to progress initial ideas and concepts, and organisations developing shared resources to disseminate learning globally.

Grants that supported capacity building were highly valued and appreciated by recipients. In Brazil, interest in the Community Land Trust (CLT) model significantly piqued following a study visit from the Caño Martín Peña CLT in Puerto Rico, a successful CLT operating in a context encountering broadly similar challenges, and a working group of interested parties, communities and practitioners formed. This interest was harnessed and sustained due to World Habitat's financial support that allowed commitment of staff resources to this work. This type of funding, in contexts where the concepts and principles of community-led housing are relatively new, was particularly valued, as noted by one grant recipient in Central and South Eastern Europe who commented that *"The activities we wanted to finance were activities that are not usually financed by other donors"* due to perceptions of risk and lack of familiarity with community-led housing models.

Although grant recipients were encouraged to specify and develop activities that enabled them to achieve particular objectives, the nature of funding from World Habitat was valued for its flexible application procedures and the absence of rigid monitoring of outcomes. This approach reflected the uncertainty of the early stages of planning new community-led housing and filled funding gaps for community-led housing groups.

Grant recipients also highlighted that World Habitat's seed funding had enabled them to leverage additional funding for the development of particular resources, project designs, or additional activities. In some cases, having early stage funding from World Habitat helped to demonstrate confidence and viability in projects, which could then attract other funders, or helped to enhance human resource capacity to enable work on larger funding applications or lobbying work. Funding from World Habitat was perceived by one group to have helped them to *"kick into a higher gear and move several steps ahead"* in the development of their project, and seed funding was significant for the development of the *On Common Ground* publication by the Center for CLT Innovation, a now-published informative resource on community-led housing globally.

Policy and resource impacts

The GCLH Programme sought to develop and impact upon policy for community-led housing and to enhance conditions for the acquisition of land and finance. In addition to the impacts outlined above, including support for groups in leveraging additional funds, the first years of the GCLH Programme also show that grant recipients have begun to impact upon local policy frameworks in their localities, which may enhance access to other resources such as land and finance.

A large number of participants in the GCLH Programme were at early stages of development and often in the process of identifying land or buildings to acquire or negotiating the economic and legal arrangements that need to be in place to acquire assets. Given different social, legal, economic, political and cultural contexts, there is no singular or linear approach to developing community-led housing policy globally, and participants regularly cited locally-specific barriers to project development and implementation.

Emerging impacts on policy can be traced back to some activities within the GCLH Programme. One example is through World Habitat's facilitation and funding of the MOBA network members in Central and South Eastern Europe, a coalition of activists and groups from Croatia, Hungary, Czech Republic, Serbia and Slovenia. These organisations created the MOBA Housing Development Fund aimed at providing seed capital to projects in its network, funded by the Swiss cooperative ABZ. While World Habitat does not provide finance to the Development Fund, it was felt that their formalisation as a collective transnational group – supported and facilitated by World Habitat seed funding – had helped to develop a stronger collective profile that would appear more credible to global funders.

Another example is the development of a legislative base for community land trusts in Rio. In 2021, the Rio de Janeiro City Council included community land trusts in the City's updated Master Plan, reflecting the extensive work of Catalytic Communities, an organisation philosophically and financially supported by World Habitat. Exchanges between the Caño Martín Peña CLT, a recipient of a World Habitat Award prior to the GCLH Programme, and Catalytic Communities, helped to educate and showcase a new approach to community land trust models and consider its applicability to informal settlements. While the initial and specific exchange was coordinated by the Lincoln Institute rather than World Habitat, the development of this relationship is in part a consequence of the World Habitat Awards, as well as the GCLH Programme grants awarded to Catalytic Communities, which in turn enhanced their internal capacity and resource and supported the advancement of CLTs in Rio. The development of a legislative base demonstrates a tangible impact of the global knowledge transfers and transnational networks that have developed through the GCLH Programme and suggests significant potential for the use of the CLT Model in informal settlements and in a city disrupted by gentrification, displacement, evictions, and housing exclusion for many years.

This "*deeper institutionalisation*" of community-led housing in policies and plans was seen as important to its further adoption in new contexts. Other grant recipients highlighted significant political difficulties, often due to scepticism among policymakers and views that the role of the state has not always been helpful to or supportive of the needs of

communities, particularly in areas of the Global South. Many participants in the GCLH Programme argued that their interest in collaborating with the networks that World Habitat co-ordinate and fund is precisely because of perceived ignorance of or hostility towards community-led housing, and that these networks allow them to enhance and refine ways in which they might try to influence policymakers in their own contexts based on the experiences of others. However, the need for specialist knowledge of local, regional and national legal and funding frameworks was regularly cited as important by participants, highlighting that there may be limits to the impacts of transnational exchanges of knowledge and experience.

Conclusion

- Early stage financing provided by World Habitat has helped to boost the organisational capacity and profile of many grant recipients.
 - World Habitat grants have often filled funding gaps for community-led housing groups, particularly where projects may be perceived as risky and where community-led housing is unfamiliar to policymakers and funders.
 - World Habitat's approach to grant funding is highly regarded by grant recipients for its flexibility and opportunity to innovate during the lifespan of grants, reflecting the uncertainty and non-linear development of community-led housing.
 - Grant recipients have begun to enhance conditions for community-led housing in their local contexts, including inclusion of models in masterplans and development of new funding mechanisms. While many of these achievements have been aided by transnational networking and collaboration, there remains a need for specialist knowledge of local contexts and circumstance for broader diffusion of community-led housing.
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