

“When the Lord blesses a person with riches: he makes him a steward of them for the good of all, not for his own good.”

– Pope Francis



TRAINING REFLECTION
February - March 2024

Fundraising

Let's be creative to ensure the continuity of our actions!

Introduction

Following the example of St Vincent de Paul and the teachings of the Church, AIC's mission is to combat poverty and exclusion in all their forms, through transformative initiatives and projects. To this end, we work with our sisters and brothers living in poverty, encouraging each person to discover their own strengths, supporting education and promoting dignity for all, speaking out against injustice and putting pressure on decision-makers, with the goal of eradicating the causes of poverty¹. In order **to carry out our purpose**, we need not only voluntary activity, but also **financial resources**.

Good **communication** is a fundamental skill in fundraising: we need to be able to explain and convey to others the work we do and its objectives. In this way we are able to encourage them to contribute to our cause. Good communication is about **showing donors that, by donating money, they have the power to make a significant difference in the world**. Therefore, it is important to find the best ways to explain to them how, in a very concrete way, they can help fight poverty and improve the quality of life of the people who are most vulnerable, while also transforming their own lives. Indeed, their donation allows them to contribute to a noble cause, which can have a positive impact on their self-esteem.

All members of the association are potential fundraisers and co-responsible for the search for resources. Therefore, we must all have a good understanding of what our Association does, that is, the “how”, “why” and “what for” of our Association.

On the other hand, fundraising activities are also useful for improving the image of our association – they contribute to its visibility – and are essential for its sustainability and for ensuring a greater impact of our actions in the long term.

The **purpose of this training reflection** is to share some ideas or tools that can help to raise, in a creative way, the funds we all need to carry out our actions.

¹ [AIC's Mission](#), as defined on the AIC website.

1. Some fundamental principles

We need to keep in mind certain principles in order to raise funds effectively.

- **Knowledge:**
 - Of the association and its needs, in order to be able to present them
 - Of potential donors and their characteristics, in order to ask for their support in the most appropriate way. There are differences in donation customs, the legal environment and the availability of funds and it is important to take these into account.
- **Communication:** we should use the most appropriate media and develop messages that:
 - Present the association and its needs
 - Match the objectives of potential donors with those of our association
- **Organization and planning:** we will need to create a strategy.
- **The request:** if we do not ask, we will not be given.

“You miss 100% of the shots you don’t take” – Wayne Gretzky, Hockey legend

By asking for support for our work with beneficiaries, we are more likely to receive support. It’s a real opportunity and we need to seize it! People donate to others because they are asked. When asking, be proactive, persistent and polite.

- **Thanking our donors:** it is essential to **immediately thank** all the people/organizations that donate something to our association. It is a sign of respect for their decision to donate and our gratitude may predispose them to contribute again to our association in the future.
- **Information:** not only is it important to show donors how they have the power to make a significant difference in the world, it is also essential to let them know, at a later date, the **concrete impact** of the financial support received, through clear and complete activity reports that highlight it.
- **Perseverance and patience:** it takes time to consolidate an effective fundraising strategy, one that is based on a relationship of trust with donors.

2. Developing an effective fundraising strategy

The association should have a dedicated team of individuals who, based on an overall strategic plan, develop and coordinate a fundraising strategy. Ideally, it should cover a period of several years and include realistic financial projections concerning income and expenditure. The fundraising strategy should determine objectives, intended results, and the amount of funds that need to be raised in order to meet the objectives.

In addition, a database of contacts of organizations or individuals – including past donors – should be established. It is also useful to reflect on past fundraising activities, if any, as there are always lessons to be learned from both successes and failures.

- **Steps to develop a fundraising strategy**

You will find below a series of steps to help you develop a fundraising strategy².

Step 1: Mission and objectives of the association

The team in charge should do a planning exercise that defines the overall mission and objectives on which the fundraising strategy should be based.

Step 2: Internal and external influences

Internal and external influences that may affect our fundraising plan should be considered by conducting a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis. Generally, strengths and weaknesses are internal influences on our association, while opportunities and threats are usually external. Here is an example of a SWOT analysis:

STRENGTHS <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Many contacts- Well-trained leaders- Attractive public image- Good reputation	WEAKNESSES <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ability to handle new projects- Lack of experience- Few volunteers
OPPORTUNITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Improving public image- Better use of traditions- Building organizational sustainability- Attracting new volunteers	THREATS <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Competition with other organizations- Reduced donations in the current economic climate

The results of the SWOT analysis will give a clearer idea of the opportunities and potential drawbacks to be taken into account. It is a good idea to refer to this analysis also later on, in order to evaluate the progress of our fundraising strategy.

Step 3: Fundraising objectives

Based on the needs of the association (Step 1) and the results of the SWOT analysis (Step 2), fundraising objectives can be identified (e.g., securing funds to purchase land on which to build a shelter, or securing funds to cover the salaries of the workers who will support the association's work for three years). Priorities should be clearly established.

Step 4: Types of donors

We should identify potential donors and gather more information about them.

² Taken from "The Guide to Good Fundraising" by the UK Institute of Fundraising cited at https://duz92c7qaoni3.cloudfront.net/documents/2_9_1_ES_fundraising-booklet.pdf.

Step 5: Fundraising methods

Once we have determined the objectives, the types of donors available and the estimated time the fundraising will take, we should decide in which fundraising methods to invest the association's human and material resources. It is important to determine the amount of time that can be spent on the proposed activities so that this does not affect the development of activities with beneficiaries.

Step 6: Resources and budget

Investing time and money in fundraising activities is essential for them to be effective. For each planned fundraising activity, estimate the human, material and financial resources that will be required. A budget should also be drawn up, estimating the costs and potential revenues of the activity, taking into account possible risk factors that may limit the latter (e.g., rain will reduce attendance and revenues at an outdoor event).

3. Building a relationship with donors

Fundraising takes time, especially in order to build stable and lasting **relationships of trust** with donors, relationships which guarantee that they continue to contribute funds. To this end, it is essential, in addition to showing them our appreciation, to inform them regularly of how the resources they have contributed have been used and of their real impact on our projects.

There are many types of potential donors. Here are some examples:

- **Individuals:** these could include volunteers and staff members, family members, friends, former members.
- **Local and national government:** some support associations by providing funding to work together on promotional projects.
- Local, national and multinational **companies.** They can contribute with money or by giving gifts in kind and knowledge. Sponsorship agreements can be established in which our association promotes the company in exchange for a specific contribution.
- **The United Nations and related agencies (UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, WHO):** UN agencies provide large amounts of funding worldwide.
- **European funds:** The European Commission has important funding programs for the developing world in fields such as social reintegration and inclusion of marginalized communities, citizenship and human rights education, gender equality, sexual and reproductive health education, environmental protection and culture. Here it should be noted that the administration of the projects it funds requires greater management capacity. It is also important to note that only legally registered organizations are eligible and we must ensure that our association complies with the legal requirements.
- **Foundations:** Many countries have foundations that provide grants to selected organizations and causes.
- **International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs):** some international charitable organizations may offer support resources.

- **Local groups:** for example, the Vincentian Family or different AIC groups can support projects in which they also participate.

4. Income generating activities

There are many ways to raise funds and new ones are being developed all the time. Here are just a few examples, but **we're sure you can add many more!**

SALES	EVENTS		OTHER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donated food or gifts • Theatre/dance/movie tickets • Stickers/badges • T-shirts, pens and bags with the logo/name of the association • Lanterns and rosaries • Crafts • Branded merchandise • Virtual cakes • Cakes/biscuits • Recipes • Second-hand clothing • Christmas cards • Fabric/stitching • Candles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solidarity banquet • Bingo • Award ceremony • Cocktail party /exhibition/art sale • Music concert • Face-to-face or virtual benefit concert • Fashion show • Sporting event with sponsors • Exhibition • International food fair, typical dishes of the country • Marathon, walkathon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing a meal/dance and selling table places • Cooking or pastry contest with the sponsorship of as many private firms as possible • Recital of poems and songs • Raffle/lottery • Auction • Cultural evening • Sponsored movie premiere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collections during mass • Printing and selling calendars with various photographs • Car wash

5. Sentences that can help you in your fundraising efforts

- *"Your help is critical to making this project possible – every little donation counts!"*
- *"Together we can make a difference – will you join our cause?"*
- *"Your generosity can change lives – make a donation today!"*
- *"Our goal is to raise funds for a good cause – will you help us achieve it?"*
- *"Every contribution counts and brings us closer to achieving our goal – join us!"*
- *"Be part of this solidarity project and contribute your grain of sand."*
- *"Your donation is an investment in a better future – thank you for being part of this story!"*
- *"With your help, we can make this dream a reality – together we are unstoppable!"*
- *"Your solidarity can change lives – will you help us make it happen?"*
- *"Every contribution adds up and brings us closer to our goal – we're counting on you!"*
- *"Your generosity can make a difference in the lives of many people. Join us and let's transform lives together."*

- *“With your help, we can advance projects that benefit our whole community – join our cause!”*
- *“With your financial support, we can create a lasting impact on the lives of those who need it most – contribute now!”*
- *“Every contribution counts and encourages us to continue working for a more just world – thank you for your collaboration!”*
- *“Your solidarity is the engine that drives us forward – thank you for believing in our mission!”*
- *“Your generosity can change lives and turn dreams into reality – thank you for being part of this change!”*
- *“With your donation, we can bring hope and change to those who need it most – contribute now!”*
- *“Every contribution adds up and brings us closer to our goal – thank you for being part of this cause!”*
- *“Your solidarity is the fundamental pillar that sustains our actions – thank you for your generosity!”*

**We wish you best of luck with your fundraising!
Use your talents creatively!**

Questions to discuss in your groups:

1. What struck you the most in this training reflection?
2. What do we need in order to raise funds effectively?
3. What are our strengths and weaknesses, our threats and opportunities?
4. What other forms of fundraising could we try, besides donations?
5. Create a statement to encourage donations/contributions.

Reflection compiled by Gloria Amparo Benitez and Milagros Galisteo, November 2023