



Community Fundraising Handbook



1775 K St, NW Suite 290 Washington, DC 20006
1.800.770.1100
202.296.1115
www.UNrefugees.org

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*An Afghan refugee and her child who have just returned to her homeland after years in exile.
UNHCR/T.Irwin/2007*

What is UNHCR?

UNHCR is the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN Refugee Agency.

Established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1950, the UN Refugee Agency protects refugees in hundreds of countries around the world. In fact, UNHCR is the only agency with the specific mandate to help refugees and resolve their plight.

The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees defines a refugee as “a person, who owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group, is outside the country of his or her nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country.”

Currently, some 43 million are uprooted from their homes around the world. This includes refugees who have fled their homes and crossed international borders, as well as internally displaced persons (IDPs) who have also been forced to flee their homes, but still reside within their country of origin.

The UN Refugee Agency provides those in need with humanitarian assistance—shelter, safe water, sanitation, medical care, and education. The UN Refugee Agency also ensures legal protection and advocates for the rights of

refugees and other persecuted individuals. There are currently more than 6,000 UNHCR staff members working in 118 countries. Eighty-four percent of UNHCR staff members work directly in conflict zones. Many UNHCR employees are refugees themselves.

WHAT IS USA FOR UNHCR?

USA for UNHCR is the United States Association for UNHCR, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit charitable organization that supports the UN Refugee Agency’s humanitarian work to protect and assist refugees around the world. The organization strives to meet the needs of the world’s most vulnerable people, building support and awareness in the United States for UNHCR’s life-saving relief programs.

HOW CAN I HELP TO SUPPORT REFUGEES AND THE WORK OF UNHCR?

The USA for UNHCR Community Fundraising Handbook includes a series of suggestions on how you can enlist your community—friends, family, colleagues and others—to raise funds to support the UN Refugee Agency’s work with refugees and other displaced people. No matter who you are, you can organize a successful fundraising event. This handbook includes fundraising ideas for students, adults, community groups, and professional offices.

Keep in mind that most events can be hosted by anyone. Events are classified in their respective sections because they appear to be the most popular and feasible for that specific host. However, events can be easily adapted. We’ve featured three real fundraising stories in this handbook which have proven to be successful in the past. Also, please remember that the event descriptions are meant to serve as suggestions. The level of activities varies widely. Some events are more intricate and more time intensive than others. Please choose an event that best fits your personal schedule and availability.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs):

1. What type of support can USA for UNHCR offer me if I decide to organize a fundraising event in my community?

While we are happy to provide guidance and material assistance wherever possible, we are not able to provide financial backing for fundraising activities. Instead, we recommend designing your fundraising activity to pay for itself, with the extra funds being sent as a donation to USA for UNHCR.

We do produce publicity materials including brochures, DVDs, posters, newsletters, and other items that we would be happy to provide to support your fundraising activities. There is also a list of available materials on our website: www.UNrefugees.org.

If you require assistance with fundraising procedures (especially if you would like to arrange to have tax receipts sent to those involved in your fundraising activity), or you have questions about the work of the UN Refugee Agency, you can always email us at: info@usaforunhcr.org or call us toll free at **1-800-770-1100**.

2. If I invite 100 people to my event should I expect 100 people to show up?

No. Attendance varies widely depending on the event. It is very unlikely that 100 percent of invitees will actually attend. If appropriate, you may ask people to RSVP, especially if you’re hosting an event such as a concert, theater performance, or presentation. However, the number of people that RSVP is not likely a definite number; more or less people may attend.

3. Should everyone who donates or participates in the event receive a tax receipt?

It depends. It is important to remember that tax receipts are only issued to donors who make a contribution voluntarily for which they expect to receive no goods or services in return. For this reason, the value of a tax receipt issued to a donor relates to the amount they have given to USA for UNHCR as a gift. Donations made in a collective “hat” or donation box do not warrant a tax receipt if no record is kept of who gave the donation and the individual amount. Volunteers are not permitted to issue tax receipts on behalf of USA for UNHCR. This function can only be done by USA for UNHCR staff members. So if appropriate, be sure to have all donors give their complete mailing address, so USA for UNHCR can send them a thank you letter and a tax receipt.

As an example, if a person purchases a ticket in a raffle, he or she does not receive a tax receipt, as the ticket is purchasing a “chance to win” much like any provincial lottery ticket. Similarly, if a person purchases a ticket to a gala event for \$100, and for that ticket they receive a meal and a glass of wine that is worth \$60, the tax receipt can only be issued for \$40 (even if the meal and wine are donated—it is the “fair market” value of the good or service that determines the donated portion).

4. What are sponsorships and how do I get them?

A great way to maximize the returns of your fundraiser is to get sponsorships. Oftentimes, local businesses are happy to support a good cause with discounted or free food, prizes, event space, or signage. Other businesses without physical items to donate, such as local banks, may be willing to make a sponsorship donation to help you cover the costs of your event in exchange for public recognition for their support. Not all businesses will be able to help you out, but it never hurts to ask!

Here are some things to keep in mind with sponsorships:

- Franchise businesses (such as fast food restaurants) may not be able to independently decide to give away items for your event. Although they are often owned locally, the structure of franchises means they may not be empowered to make such donations.
- Remember to thank your sponsors...publicly! All sponsoring businesses should be acknowledged; those that give more can get more recognition, such as having their name higher and/or bigger on the sponsorship poster at your event.

5. Can you provide documentation to a potential sponsor that verifies the legitimacy of USA for UNHCR?

USA for UNHCR is happy to provide you, or any inquiring sponsors, with a letter verifying that we are a 501 (c)(3) non-profit. We can also field any questions from business owners or volunteers about the legitimacy of our organization. Please have inquiring parties contact us at **1-800-770-1100**.

FUNDRAISING EVENT IDEAS FOR K-12 STUDENTS

COLLECTION/GENERAL SOLICITATION

Summary:

This type of fundraising involves collecting or soliciting donations from members of your community. Funds can be collected at community or school functions, outside of popular department or grocery stores, or door-to-door. *Be aware that children should only do door-to-door fundraising while being accompanied by an adult.* Caroling for donations is a great example of this type of event.

Possible Timeline:

This event can be planned far in advance or it can be planned in the span of a few days. Solicitations and collections can also be executed multiple times. For example, solicitors can stand outside of a particular store every Saturday morning for a month.

Common Pitfalls:

- Beware of signs prohibiting solicitation.

SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS



Alexa and Ava collected donations outside of their local Super Stop and Shop in Simsbury, Connecticut. On one Saturday morning, the girls were able to raise \$250.

SALE OF GOODS AND SERVICES

Summary:

This type of fundraising involves the sale of a good or service in exchange for a donation. Participants purchase items and their payment is treated as a donation to USA for UNHCR, as opposed to being treated as a profit for the organizer. This type of activity could prove successful for any type of host including individuals and groups.

Variations:

- Garage sale, car wash, selling a cookbook of favorite recipes, etc.

Expected Investment:

This depends entirely on the scope of the activity. With volunteers, this sort of activity requires minimal investment. However, you must account for funds devoted to advertising and signage for the event. If you plan to hold a car wash, you must consider how you will pay for the space or how you will approach a business owner and ask for the space to be donated. If you're selling a cookbook, you must factor in the cost of having the cookbook printed. It is possible to get things like space or signage donated by businesses. **For more information on donations and sponsorships, please see FAQs on page 5.**

Possible Timeline:

Planning should occur not less than 3 weeks in advance of the event.

Common Pitfalls:

- Those purchasing the goods or services DO NOT get a tax receipt (only if they make an outright gift!). **For more information on tax receipts, please see FAQs on page 5.**
- Don't underestimate the cost of advertising and promotion. For some service-related activities, advertising might be the only cost, but it will make or break the success of the event.
- Make sure that you pay your expenses first, then donate the remainder to USA for UNHCR.

FUNDRAISING EVENT IDEAS FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

PUBLIC SPEAKER/PRESENTATION:

Summary:

Create a community awareness event featuring either a high profile guest, a credible guest (like a refugee or someone who has worked or volunteered locally or overseas with refugees), or a diverse panel of experts. We recommend that you contact a local refugee resettlement office. They may have a speaker or speakers that are willing to participate in your event. The event should be introduced as a fundraising event. At the conclusion of the presentation, be sure to thank the speaker(s) and remind the members of the audience that their donations relate to the issues addressed in the presentation and their donations can make a difference. USA for UNHCR can provide you with more information about how donations are used and general price points (i.e. \$3.00 buys one fleece blanket).

This event would also work well for adults or community groups and can be held in a town hall, a firehouse, or a community park.

Expected Investment:

The first thing that should be taken into consideration is a small token gift for the speaker (can be a cash honorarium if the speaker is a high profile individual). Be advised that speaker fees vary depending upon the type of speaker. Other things to consider include: room rental if appropriate, advertising, audio/visual equipment (as some speakers may like to accompany their presentations with a slide show), and refreshments.

Possible Timeline:

The timeline for this type of an event depends upon a number of factors, including the size of the event, access to guest speakers and their availability, and availability of rental space. Keep in mind that if the event is for the general public in a community auditorium then time must be allowed for advertising. If you are planning to send invitations, they should be sent at least 3 weeks in advance.

Common Pitfalls to Avoid

- Have materials available for people to take home and be sure to give everyone an addressed envelope and donation coupon as they leave (UNHCR can supply these items at no charge with a week's advance notice).

SPORTS TOURNAMENT:

SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS



Eric Anderson combines his love for Kubbl, a Swedish lawn game, with his concern for Darfuri refugees. The result is an annual Kubbl tournament to benefit USA for UNHCR's Aid Darfur Campaign. The tournament is held each August in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and includes about 60 participants. He charges a \$10 registration fee to each team of two. Eric obtains sponsorships from local organizations such as Norden Folk and Northwoods Brewpub and Grill. Eric also applies for grants from the Town Visitors Bureau. Eric rents a field and portable toilets, pays for refreshments, and purchases insurance. The whole event costs \$1,000, however after sponsorship, the total cost is around \$200. Eric says he spends more than 50 hours planning the event. The annual tournament proved to be a huge success and participation grows every year!

Summary:

Volunteers have had a lot of success with this type of event. In essence, this is a fundraising event in which participants come out in a festive atmosphere to play a sport while raising money for charity. The revenue can come from entrance fees, corporate sponsorship, sale of food or drink, and in some cases, raising pledges.

Variations:

- Golf, softball, soccer, kickball, flag football, swim meet.
- Team challenge. In many cases, with enough planning, you can arrange to have teams “compete” to out-fundraise each other prior to the event. This is common in any pledge-driven event.

Expected Investment:

Acquiring sponsors to help cover the costs in return for some good publicity in the community is wise and will help increase your donation to USA for UNHCR. There may be some rental costs for fields or playing spaces. You may also need to obtain a permit. Referees will have to be hired, but we encourage you to recruit volunteers to minimize costs. Also take into account funds for food and drink. At a sporting event, water is a must! There is a potential to get local businesses to sponsor the event.

For more in-depth information on sponsorships, please see the FAQs on page 5.

Possible Timeline:

Allow at least two months to organize any sort of fundraising sporting event. If corporate sponsors are to be approached more time may be needed.

Common Pitfalls to Avoid:

- Participants MUST sign a liability waiver.
- Many public places require permits in order to hold an event so be sure to abide by local regulations.
- Have a contingency plan for rain.
- Try to collect as many pledges before the event as possible.
- Remember that each participant has to have a good time. Sometimes this will require you to organize some entertainment or generate some excitement during the event.

FUNDRAISING EVENT IDEAS FOR ADULTS, COMMUNITIES, AND GROUPS

PLEDGE EVENT (SOMETHING-A-THON)

Summary:

This is an event in which participants collect pledges from individuals based upon the premise that the participant will complete some sort of task (run a certain distance, cycle across particular area, etc)

Variations:

- Invite corporate “teams” to participate and challenge each team to raise more money than their competitors.
- Read-a-thons, this variation would be great for K-12 students.
- Consider making the task a community enhancement project, such as picking up garbage or planting flowers around the neighborhood.

Expected Investment:

Generally, there is a cost to run the event and this cost can be quite high. For large multi-year events, the first year may only raise enough money to cover the costs.

Participants are the ones doing the actual fundraising since they are collecting pledges. Sometimes prizes are given to those who surpass benchmark pledge amounts—generally the prize is valued at no more than 10% of the benchmark, and prizes are often donated. **For more information on sponsorships and donations,**

SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS



Seven years ago, Margaret Hahn, along with members of Omaha, Nebraska’s Omaha Yoga School, created the Hike to Help Refugees. As shelter is often the primary need of refugees, Hike to Help Refugees has used the funds to provide all-season tents to refugees, which serve as homes and classrooms.

The first hike, held in May 2003, had fourteen supporters hiking along the Wabash Trace Nature Trail. Using a sponsorship model to raise funds, hikers garnered \$4,352 in donations.

The hike has grown into the largest grassroots fundraising campaign in the United States to support UNHCR . Hikes are now held in Iowa, Wisconsin, and Nebraska. Since the Hike’s inception in 2003, it has raised over \$100,000 to support refugees, with more than 300 hikers participating in the event.

please see the FAQs on page 5.

Possible Timeline:

These sorts of events require a bit of time to prepare, as participants need to be recruited (by phone, word of mouth, flyers, or advertising) and then participants need time to raise pledges. The day, week, or month when all participants are completing their task often requires a number of volunteers who need to be recruited or trained. This does not necessarily require a lot of money, but it does take time, as the professionalism and enthusiasm of the volunteers really affects the participants and will affect the success of repeating this sort of event.

For a smaller event, where a group might hope to raise \$1,000 or less through the efforts of a handful of participants, plan to have at least 2 months to organize. Larger events, where there may be hundreds of participants and larger revenues, require up to a year of preparation time and a series of committed volunteers to coordinate planning and activities.

Common Pitfalls to Avoid:

- Sometimes the “task” requires local permits that might take time to acquire (especially true for events like bike rides or runs).
- Try to have all participants collect the money at the time they ask for pledges, not after the event.
- Be sure to have all donors give their complete mailing address, so USA for UNHCR can send them a thank you letter and a tax receipt when appropriate.

THEATER/CONCERT BENEFIT:

Summary:

Encourage a local music or theater group to donate their services for an evening. Many community theaters will allow a worthwhile cause to sell tickets to a dress rehearsal or pre-show. Likewise, many local musicians are looking for a place to play, and will gladly perform for free if they are able to get the exposure at no cost to them. This event could also be successful for college students. Students could work in conjunction with their university’s theater department or they could hold a concert at a local bar or restaurant.

Expected Investment:

You'll need to do a bit of research and solicit the support of the performers or the performance hall. There may also be a down payment or a small fee required. Sale of tickets should be no less than the value of the down payment, so as to ensure that if something unforeseen happens, you will not pay out of pocket.

Possible Timeline:

Make sure that you leave enough time to sell tickets in advance. If you're capitalizing on the generosity of the community theater, the performance time will likely be set well in advance, typically for a weeknight, which means that you'll have to give your attendees time to organize their schedules to be free that evening. For a benefit concert of this magnitude, plan to spend no less than 1 ½ months in preparation.

Common Pitfalls to Avoid:

- Note that if the event is a concert, there may be noise bylaws to consider in some neighborhoods.
- If you plan to sell alcoholic beverages, this may require a permit.
- Don't rely on ticket sales at the door. These last minute sales are only extra (welcomed) revenue.

FUNDRAISING EVENT IDEAS FOR THE WORKPLACE

PER PERSON FUNDRAISING:

Summary:

This type of fundraising is very simple and it requires that you collect a small donation from each person in your workplace. A good may be given to the person in return, or the donation may serve as a "fee" to participate in a specific activity. For example, ask everyone in your workplace to give a small amount--\$2.00, to wear jeans to work on a Friday. Most people will not mind giving a small donation and this can raise quite a bit of money depending upon the size of the office and how often the fundraising is repeated. If donations are collected every Friday in exchange for employees' ability to wear jeans, a great amount of donations could be collected. This is a way to increase both office morale and public awareness of the work of the UN Refugee Agency.

Variations:

- Give something to each person for their donation—a sticker, or a piece of paper with basic facts on the UN Refugee Agency (available from USA for UNHCR). **For more information on available materials, please see the FAQs on page 4.**
- Suggest that everyone in your office empty the change out of his or her pockets after going for lunch or coffee.

Expected Investment:

This is an easy fundraiser, requiring nothing more than time and a willingness to ask for a donation and to answer questions about the work of UNHCR.

Common Pitfalls to Avoid:

- *Give people a way to say no—if someone is struggling for money, this sort of fundraising can make them feel very awkward.*

FUNDRAISING ETHICS

USA for UNHCR is committed to being accountable to its donors, as our work relies on retaining the donor’s trust. Although it is not imperative to subscribe to a formal code of ethics when helping USA for UNHCR raise funds in your community, it is important to remember that the UN Refugee Agency works on behalf of individuals who frequently have little or no voice of their own as a result of circumstances beyond their control. We believe that as advocates for refugees and other displaced people, it is important to portray them with dignity and honesty, and to assume that they each have individual beliefs, aspirations and strengths.

LONG-TERM FUNDRAISING

Student associations and church or community groups that want to partner with us on a continuing basis can have an authentic refugee camp tent, useful for holding outdoor events. Ask for an application form in order to establish a formal relationship with USA for UNHCR and receive a tent.