

WORKSHOP

Strengthening IPPNW Through Effective Fundraising

24th IPPNW World Congress, Nagasaki

Facilitated by: Carlos Umaña, IPPNW Co-President

Saturday October 4

10:30-12:00

Introduction:

Fundraising is the lifeblood of organized civil society. It fuels advocacy, campaigning, research, networking, and direct action—everything that drives our mission forward. Yet despite its vital role, securing sustainable funding remains one of the greatest challenges we face.

This workshop was designed to expand participants' perspectives and equip them with strategic insights and practical tools to:

- Diversify funding streams
- Identify potential donors and funding opportunities
- Strengthen donor engagement
- And cultivate a resilient mindset to refine and grow their fundraising skills

But fundraising is not just about money. It's about relationships. It's about trust. It's about building a community of supporters who believe in the mission and want to be part of the solution.

Through knowledge-sharing and interactive learning, this workshop aimed to empower participants to elevate their fundraising efforts—and, in doing so, amplify the impact of their work.

The methodology was rooted in *conversational brainstorming*. The facilitator guided the dialogue through open-ended questions, and the content emerged organically—from the participants' reasoning, experience, and shared conclusions.

Overview:

This workshop covered:

- The personal and organizational challenges in fundraising.
- The definition of fundraising in our context
- The various actors and steps to carry out fundraising.
- Different types of donors.
- The various forms of fundraising, from grassroots efforts to major donor cultivation.
- Innovative strategies for securing institutional grants and partnerships.
- The psychological and ethical aspects of donor engagement.
- The role of digital platforms and crowdfunding in modern fundraising efforts.
- Strategies for organization building and increasing membership.

What are the challenges to fundraising?

To kick off the workshop, we posed a provocative, open-ended question: “*Why do you hate fundraising?*”

While participants settled in, they were given five minutes to reflect and jot down their thoughts. The goal was to surface the real, often unspoken challenges that make fundraising difficult—even uncomfortable. Here’s what emerged from the discussion:

- **Fundraising is time-consuming and arduous.** It’s tedious work that demands persistence and emotional energy.
- **It feels like “dirty work.”** Talking about money is taboo in many cultures. It’s a sensitive topic that people often avoid.
- **Fear of rejection and failure looms large.** Asking for money can feel like begging, and the emotional toll of hearing “no” is real.
- **It reinforces dependence.** There’s pressure to deliver on promises made to donors, and a risk of drifting from the organization’s mission to meet donor expectations.
- **Fundraisers may feel insecure.** They might lack deep knowledge about nuclear weapons or feel unsure about financial processes—how funds are raised, managed, and spent.
- **Finding the right donors is hard.** Not every donor is a good fit, and identifying those who truly align with the mission takes time and strategy.
- **Power dynamics are uncomfortable.** The fundraiser is often seen as the “asker,” while the donor holds the power. This imbalance can feel disempowering.
- **Operational funding is harder to secure.** It’s easier to raise money for specific projects (like research) than for essential functions like staff salaries or rent.

Throughout the discussion, we kept returning to the initial list of challenges—but this time, with a new lens. Participants began to reframe their thinking, offering powerful counterarguments that shifted the tone from hesitation to empowerment:

- **We are solving a problem that others can’t—or won’t—solve.** That makes us essential. Fundraising isn’t about asking for favors; it’s about connecting people to the solution. If we don’t ask, we’re denying them the chance to be part of something transformative. *How dare we not ask?* Every “no” isn’t a rejection—it’s a filter. It brings us closer to the people who are truly aligned.
- **We’re offering an invitation to greatness.** Donors aren’t just giving money—they’re joining a tribe. They’re stepping into a role in solving one of humanity’s most urgent challenges: the abolition of nuclear weapons. That’s not a transaction—it’s a calling.
- **We are not beggars. We are bridge-builders.** We’re reconnecting people to a cause that matters. And while donors give, they also receive—meaning, purpose, belonging. This isn’t charity. It’s a privilege to be part of this movement.
- **There’s a parallel between for-profit and non-profit fundraising.** In the for-profit world, investors take risks in exchange for financial returns. In our world, donors invest in societal change. The structure is similar—but the return is moral, not monetary. Our task is to help them see that value clearly.

Who are we? Why are we here?

Before we ask others to invest in our mission, we must first reflect on our own. Why are we here? Why are we doing this work?

It's not just about strategy—it's about personal conviction. When we reconnect with our motivation, we gain clarity on the value of our work and the urgency of our cause.

We are here to solve a problem that others don't know how to solve. That makes our role not just important—but irreplaceable. In a very real sense, we are being entrusted with something immensely valuable.

What Makes a Great Fundraiser?

A great fundraiser is more than a skilled communicator—they are a force of nature.

They are positive, optimistic, kind, mature, professional, and relentless. They have people skills. They are affable, convincing, sincere, persuasive, passionate, honest, transparent, knowledgeable, competent, flexible, diligent, and confident.

Above all, they believe in what they're doing.

Confidence and authenticity are non-negotiable. If our passion isn't real, there will be no spark—and without spark, no fire. But when our authenticity shines through, magic happens. We must embody execution. We must show that we are visionary, that we think critically, and that we're ready for the fight.

We're not just telling a story—we're telling the truth. Fundraising is storytelling, yes—but it's not fiction. We're sharing the truth: the catastrophic humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, and the urgent need for abolition. But we're also sharing our truth—our values, our drive, our humanity.

We're not just raising money. We're raising ourselves. And when we do it with authenticity, courage, and clarity, people listen.

Building the tribe

Let's be clear about our goal: **we're here to build a tribe.**

We're *connecting the disconnected*—people who want to collaborate, who want to hear from one another, but haven't yet found the space to do so. We are that space. We are the glue.

Successful movements and organizations don't try to appeal to everyone. They resonate with a specific culture—a particular slice of society that sees itself reflected in the mission. Not all the culture, but the right culture.

This is where identity meets action. When a donor says, "*Of course I support IPPNW. That's who I am. People like us do things like this,*" they're not just backing a cause—they're affirming their values.

We speak directly to those people. Personally. Intentionally. We're not broadcasting to the masses; we're reaching out to the few who matter most. Our tribe is not everyone—it's *the right ones*.

Where do the resources come from?

We are not just obtaining resources in the form of money. We are also getting resources in the form of human resources (volunteer work, or money to hire specific talents), office space, office materials, travels, etc.

Possible sources of funds:

- Crowd funding: on the streets, online: newsletters, websites
- Grant applications: foundations, governments, businesses, institutions
- Legacy: wills and bequests
- Individual donors: philanthropists
- Selling merchandize and books
- Charity events: concerts, races, dinners, raffles, bake sales
- Sponsorships

Who is the donor?

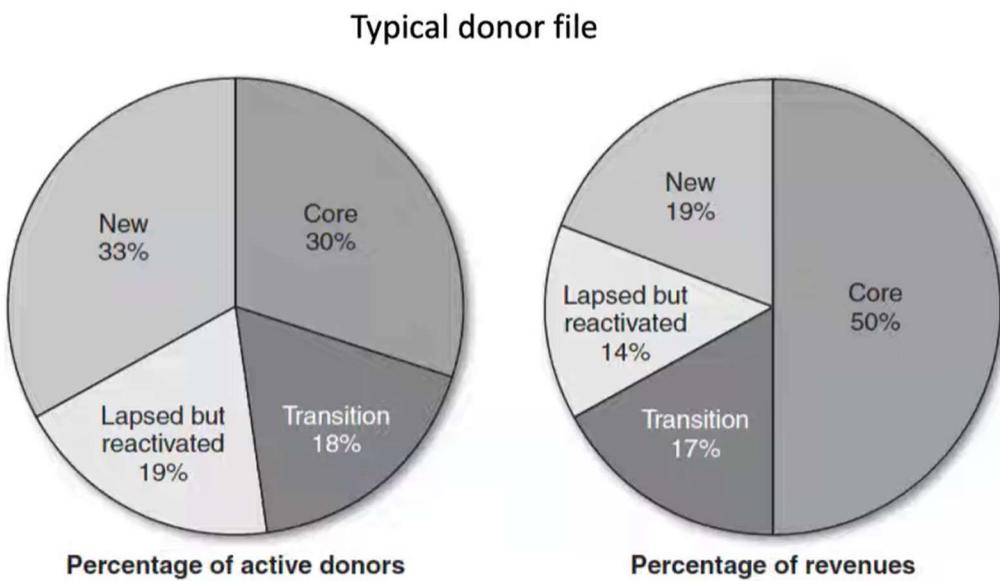
We are all donors. We donate our energy, our time, our creativity and our will.

Donors can be:

1. Individuals
2. Events
3. Foundations
4. Corporations
5. Inside members
6. Digital Platforms

We can categorize these in terms of their donation habit into the following types of donors:

1. Potential (everyone)
2. New
3. Transition (those on the way of becoming core donors)
4. Core donors (50% of revenues)
5. Lapsed donors (used to be core or transition donors, but stopped donating)
6. Lapsed, but reactivated donors



A. Brooks.

Core donors are the backbone of our fundraising efforts. They're not just generous—they're committed. According to Arthur Brooks, core donors contribute up to 50% of total resources, and it takes an average of four years for a potential donor to reach that level of engagement. This transformation doesn't happen by accident—it's the result of consistent, thoughtful relationship-building.

Before we focus on acquiring new donors, our first priority must be to nurture the ones we already have. Keeping core donors engaged, appreciated, and aligned with our mission is essential.

Lapsed donors—those who were once core donors but stopped giving—are just as likely to donate again as brand-new prospects. People lapse for many reasons: financial changes, shifting priorities, lack of visibility into impact, or simple disengagement. But a lapsed donor may also signal a breakdown in our strategy. It's possible we dropped the ball with someone who mattered. That's a wake-up call.

A word of caution: fundraising is not an end in itself. A donation from the wrong donor—one misaligned with our values—may offer short-term gain but long-term cost. If it pulls us away from our principles or dilutes our message, it's not worth it. We must protect our tribe and stay rooted in the reason we raise money: to advance the mission, not the institution.

Our ideal donors share key traits:

- They are resourceful and passionate
- They have a history of giving and financial stability
- They believe in our cause and trust our leadership
- They carry no conflicts of interest
- And most importantly, they see themselves as part of our tribe

The relationship between us and the donor should be one of equals. We're not begging—we're offering purpose. We're doing the work they want to see done in the world. Fundraising, at its best, is about connecting people to their core principles.

And yes, there are tangible benefits for donors too:

- Tax deductions (often substantial, depending on the country)
- Enhanced reputation and social capital
- Public recognition and exposure
- And perhaps most meaningfully—a sense of moral clarity. A kind of modern-day letter of indulgence that says: I'm doing my part

What do we need resources for?

Resources—especially funding—are the fuel that powers our mission. But to secure them, we must first be crystal clear about what we're trying to achieve. Clarity is not optional; it's foundational. The more precisely we define our goals and the resources required to reach them, the more effectively we can mobilize support.

If we need funds to purchase something—what is it, and why does it matter? If we're hiring someone—who are they, and how will they accelerate our impact? Every resource must be tied to a clear purpose and a measurable shift toward our goal.

And we must never lose sight of that goal. We are not here to promote ourselves—we are here to advocate for the solution. In our case, we are not selling IPPNW; we are offering a vision of a nuclear weapons-free world. That is our product. That is our promise. This is the “return in investment” for the donor.

How do we get to the donors?

There is a process:

1. Laying the Soil: Cultivating Champions

We begin by working with the champions—those who believe deeply in our cause and have access to networks of influence and resources. Champions are *essential*. Everyone we meet is a potential ally, but those within our closest circles offer the greatest chances of success.

Hence, we invite champions into our inner circle, knowing they, in turn, have donors in theirs. This phase is about building trust, forging alliances, and expanding our base of support. A smart practice is to identify high-level champions and potential high-level donors early on.

We should invest time in growing this network deliberately—it will snowball. Mapping these relationships in a spreadsheet or mind map can help visualize connections and guide outreach.

2. Planting the Seeds: Building Donor Relationships

Cold introductions rarely bear fruit. They can even close doors that might have opened later. A warm introduction—facilitated by a trusted champion—ensures that a potential donor will genuinely listen.

Champions act as bridges. Through them, we meet donors informally and begin cultivating relationships. We don't ask for money upfront. Instead, we focus on connection, familiarity, and shared purpose. These are people, not ATMs—let's never forget that.

Taking the time to build authentic relationships now will save time and effort later. It's the foundation for sustainable support.

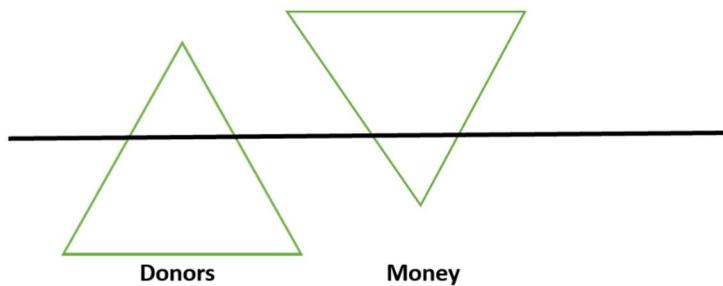
3. Reaping the Harvest: Launching the Ask

When the relationship is strong and the timing is right, we move into action. Many fundraising experts recommend launching a campaign to generate momentum.

Outreach—especially via email—should be concise, compelling, and easy to act on. Short, sweet and simple, easy to execute. By this point, donors already know who we are and what we stand for. They're expecting us. And they're ready.

Big Money vs. Little Money.

Most of the funding in our organizations comes from a small group of donors. In fact, it's common for **20% of donors to contribute 80% of the income**. This is the tip of the triangle—the high-impact core.



So yes, we must prioritize these **large donors**. Their support is critical, and nurturing those relationships is essential.

But what about the **small donors**? Why invest time in those who give modest amounts? Because we're not just raising money—we're building a movement. Every small donor is a member of our tribe. They expand our circles, amplify our message, and sometimes even become champions who connect us to larger donors.

Small donors help us grow horizontally. They bring energy, diversity, and reach. And we must remember: people don't just donate money. They contribute **time, skills, knowledge, and**

spirit. That's how movements are built—by expanding circles of influence, not just deepening pockets. One grain of rice could tip the scale.

On grants

Grant writing is a discipline unto itself—demanding, meticulous, and often daunting, yet indispensable. It requires a level of attention so significant that some universities offer entire courses dedicated to mastering it. While the process can be time-consuming and occasionally unpleasant, it is essential for sustaining and expanding meaningful work.

Organizations must resist the temptation to tailor projects merely to fit available funding; doing so risks drifting from their core mission (and will likely not succeed anyway). Just as with individual donors, alignment between the organization and the grant-making foundation is crucial. The application must reflect the highest standards of professionalism, ideally crafted with care by dedicated staff who understand both the project and the funder's priorities.

The grant application must be **specific, strategic, and impact-oriented.**

When applying for grants, specificity is your strongest ally. Funders are far more likely to support proposals with clear, credible, and achievable goals. While it may seem that research projects attract more funding than political advocacy, the key often lies in how the proposal is framed.

Rather than submitting broad or abstract requests, articulate concrete, measurable objectives.

For example:

- Secure a commitment from a specific city to join the ICAN Cities' Appeal
- Pass a resolution or piece of legislation in support of our goals
- Persuade two key parliamentarians

If direct policy change isn't feasible, propose a project with wide applicability—such as producing educational materials, conducting targeted research, or organizing a capacity-building workshop. These are often more fundable and still advance our mission.

Funders want to see their money *make a difference*. A vague application that reads like a request to “keep the organization running” can signal a lack of focus or sustainability. Grants are not meant to cover general overhead—they're meant to drive impact.

Finally, it is a good idea to include **other sources of funding** in your proposal. Demonstrating co-funding or in-kind support signals *financial resilience and strategic planning*, both of which increase funder confidence.

Organization building: Lessons from the field

Clara shared several successful strategies from **IPPNW Sweden's** (SLMK) experience with member recruitment and engagement:

- **SLMK publishes a membership journal four times a year**, which is also distributed to ambassadors, foreign ministry officials, members of parliament, and other key stakeholders—broadening visibility and influence.
- **They attend fairs and events** relevant to doctors and medical students, meeting potential members where they already are.

- **They maintain a yearly membership fee** and send fundraising letters twice a year to all members and donors—people who are already part of the tribe.
- **They offer free blood pressure checks** as a public engagement tool—often combined with Target X actions or street outreach. This approach draws crowds and creates opportunities to share information.
- **SLMK is planning a Nordic tour**, where doctors will travel across the region to meet with decision-makers, civil servants, and fellow health professionals. It's a strategy of "doctors recruiting doctors"—peer-to-peer mobilization.
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From IPPNW Norway, the approach is more grassroots and information-driven. They recruit most members through public stands, where they pose a provocative question about nuclear weapons and engage passersby with compelling facts. While this method is resource-intensive—typically requiring two staff members for one to two days—it yields around 4–5 new members per event. The goal is not just numbers, but meaningful engagement.

Chuck shared insights from the Geneva Liaison Office (GLO), focusing on major donor fundraising. His strategy began with a small, well-defined project: establishing the Geneva office. A group of champions helped identify and approach potential large donors. After several meetings—some in person—Chuck secured a key champion who opened doors to others.

This initial success expanded his circle of influence and led to valuable in-kind contributions: volunteers, office space, venues, and new opportunities. That strong start gave him the freedom to build the office with momentum. But the work doesn't stop there—maintaining donor interest, providing updates, and nurturing the relationship is ongoing. The goal is not just retention, but growth.

Concluding remarks

The founders of ICAN often spoke of the “three Hs”: Horror, Humor, and Hope.

Horror is the raw truth—the unflinching exposure of what nuclear weapons really are: instruments of unspeakable suffering, past and present.

Hope is our compass—the vision of a peaceful, nuclear-weapons-free world that drives us forward.

And **humor** is our glue—the joy we find in each other, in collaboration, in building a tribe that dares to confront this grim reality with courage and heart.

So let's carry that spirit into our fundraising. Let's approach it with curiosity, creativity, and yes—*fun*. Let's use humor to dissolve the fear of rejection and shake off hesitation. Because the world needs us. And it needs more of us.

Let's go out there and gather the resources we need. Let's recruit new allies, new donors, and new champions. Let's build a vibrant, unstoppable tribe—one that will help deliver the future we believe in: a peaceful world free of nuclear weapons.

So let's take this work seriously—because the stakes couldn't be higher. But let's also have fun doing it. Let's laugh, connect, and build something bold together. Let's have some *serious fun*: the kind that changes the world, one relationship, one resource, one courageous step at a time.

References:

Books:

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Ruell, J. (2023) *Non-profit fundraising strategies: 7 strategies to consistently secure funding and ensure your organization doesn't fail*. James Ruell Non-Profit.

Ruell, J. (2023) *Winning Grants: How to write winning grant proposals that will get you funding for your non-profit*. James Ruell Non-Profit.

Videos and podcasts:

Arthur C. Brooks, Webinar “Fundraising and Development for Nonprofit Leaders”

Harvard Kennedy School for Executive Education

<https://www.hks.harvard.edu/educational-programs/executive-education/faculty/hks-executive-education-webcast-series/arthur-brooks-fundraising>

“What the Fundraising” – The Podcast, by Mallory Erickson

Episode 68 “Effective fundraising and Power Partner Principles with Seth Godin”

<https://malloryerickson.com/podcast/episode-68-effective-fundraising-and-power-partner-principles-with-seth-godin/>

Heller Fundraising Group – “Basics of Fundraising in 12 minutes!”

Presented by Peter Heller at St Francis College for the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce Nonprofit Summit.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKseWRzPrUI&t=11s>