**Engaging Supporters**

**Campaign concept**

Friends of Ibba Girls School (FIGS) has taken part in the Big Give Christmas Challenge annually since 2014, usually to raise the capital costs of constructing additional school facilities, so as to enrol another cohort of South Sudanese girl students at Ibba Girls Boarding School (IGBS) each year.

In 2017, however, our capital needs were already largely met through a generous grant. So we created a revenue campaign with an ambitious central goal that would galvanise Friends of the School: to feed every girl student at the School three meals a day through the 2018 school year, enabling 200 girls of primary school age to stay healthy and well-nourished, to concentrate and thus to learn undisrupted in the war-torn, food insecure, high inflation context of South Sudan.

The campaign concept was able to ignite a sense of urgency, because the School recruits a new cohort of students in January each year, and students then enrol from February. Our existing Friends are aware of this pattern, and so wanting to be able to assure girl students and their parents during recruitment and enrolment that each girl would be fed and looked after at the School through 2018 worked as a significant motivator. In addition the concept tied in with recent news coverage of famine and food insecurity in South Sudan, and so could resonate with brand new supporters too.

**Planning**

Campaign planning was grouped into two phases:

1) Preparing to Launch, and
2) Hitting our Target.

The focus of Phase 1 was to prime as many existing and new supporters as possible to give, as close to the Christmas Challenge opening time as possible, by generating high levels of awareness and a strong sense of urgency. In Phase 2 the goal was to generate a ‘second wind’ of momentum following the initial excitement of the Christmas Challenge opening.

Our target of £100,000 was a stretch: it was the highest we had ever aimed for in any Christmas Challenge, and was double our 2016 Christmas Challenge target. So we knew going in that getting supporters excited through Phase 1 would not be enough — a strong Phase 2 would be key to hitting our target.

We used a mixture of online channels (bespoke banner on our website homepage, social media, emails, temporary email...
signatures, alternative local online newspaper), traditional media (a radio talk show) and speaking events to engage supporters, as the latter align with our ethos that each supporter is part of a community of Friends who can meet to discuss and plan their support for the School. Our Chair of Trustees and School Founder each spoke at multiple events before and during to promote the campaign.

Broadly speaking, in Phase 1 we focused on seeding awareness of the campaign as widely as possible, and securing significant initial commitments (>£500) to donate so that we knew the campaign would finish Giving Tuesday in a position of strength. In Phase 2 the emphasis changed to asking supporters who were already aware of the campaign to make good on their intention to donate, using the incentive of a finite amount of time-limited matching funds to increase the sense of urgency. We also benchmarked suggested donation amounts against those of other supporters, to convey the sense of being a community aiming to reach a fundraising target for the School together.

At each event, as well as online and on the radio, we drove the response back to the Big Give website by giving out the URL with a clear call to action to donate. Our approach worked: we exceeded our target, raising £111,825, which placed us 6th out of over 500 participating Christmas Challenge charities, of which many are significantly larger and better-resourced.

**Execution**

In each phase, our communications were tailored to different groups of supporters:

**Existing Major Donors**

Every major donor who had given in previous Christmas Challenges was sent a bespoke email about the campaign, with some face-to-face follow-up conversations taking place. As a result among others three Trustees, as well as the wife of one, each decided to give £5,000. We were thus able to stagger these larger gifts, asking the husband and wife couple to donate in Phase 1 right at opening time, and the other two Trustees to donate in Phase 2 to generate fresh momentum, as their gifts helped other supporters to feel that the target was in reach, and therefore motivated them to give to ‘get the School there’.

One of the Trustees also then contacted several friends and family members asking them to give to take advantage of the matching funds, and was encouraged by their positive response.

**Individuals**

Each supporter on our mailing list also received a Save the Date email (Phase 1), followed by two reminders to donate and help the School reach its target of feeding every student in 2018 (Phase 2). We have a cluster of Coventry-based supporters, and so in Phase 1 used a local alternative newspaper and local radio to increase awareness of the campaign there.

We also scheduled our Annual Meeting for Saturday 25 November and distributed tear-off Promise Cards (see image below) there after promoting the campaign, asking Friends to particularly notify us before they left the Meeting if they intended to donate £500 or more, and giving them the URL to put up on their fridge until the 28th. Social media was used to amplify campaign messages throughout.

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**Big Give 2017 Promise Card**

I will give £_______ to Friends of Ibba Girls School in the 2017 Big Give Christmas Challenge.

Signature:

Name:

Email address/phone number:

(We will only use these details to contact you about your Big Give promise, unless given permission by you elsewhere.)

**The Big Give 2017 donation page is:**

[https://secure.thebiggive.org.uk/project/figs](https://secure.thebiggive.org.uk/project/figs)

Matching funds will be available to double your donation from 12 noon on Tues 28 November.
As a result, when the Christmas Challenge 2017 opened we knew to expect some £17,500 in major online donations on day one, out of the £32,000 that was received and matched. This gave us a strong position from which to move into Phase 2, as we were already more than halfway towards target, and knew to expect two Trustees’ donations of £5,000 still.

In Phase 2 we experimented with ‘Phone-In Friday’, allowing supporters who are less confident to make an online donation to phone our fundraising team within a specified window of time for step-by-step help. One supporter made a £100 donation as a result of this telephone support, and though this was a smaller gain than expected, Phone-In Friday was very low cost to our team, and so may be worth repeating in future years.

We also thanked every donor who had given as soon as we could, and included sharing buttons of three easy ways in which they could spread the word about the campaign to family and friends. It was very satisfying seeing clusters of new donors with the same last names start to come through as a result, and many of these have now signed up to receive our newsletter.

**Churches and other partner organisations**

Our School Founder and Chair of Trustees also spoke at two churches, a Rotary Club and a village hall before and during the campaign, which produced several donations from both cold and warm supporters. Again the Promise Cards were used to keep the website URL prominent in supporters’ minds.

In addition every existing partner church was asked to promote the campaign on Sunday 3rd December, and two did so. (Another did not respond in time, but subsequently asked that we would send a speaker in 2018.)

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**Creative Marketing**

Besides segmenting our communications and choosing a concept that we knew would have broad appeal to both existing and new supporters, we also chose ask amounts to show clearly what the matching effect would achieve (see email snapshot below). In Phase 2 emails, we stated how many gifts had already been made for each amount, encouraging further donations of those amounts. This approach was effective, as over 1 in 3 donations received was from a new supporter, including many who were on our mailing list but had never previously given, and quite a few supporters chose to give the benchmark amounts.

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To reiterate, the pound-for-pound matching effect and Gift Aid at the basic rate mean that if you give £4,459 -- the maximum possible matched amount remaining while funds last -- this could become £10,033, feeding 25 girls students 3 meals a day through the 2018 school year. Alternatively, 

- A gift of £1,222 could become £2,750, paying labourers’ wages for the year to prepare plots of land for the school to grow food and creating local jobs
- £350 could become just over £800, feeding two girls for the entire school year
- £107 could become £240, buying the school seeds and equipment to grow food crops on site in 2018

Yes, match my donation now

And if you have already given, why not tell some friends and family about the Ibbra Girls School cause and the matching funds available? Could you:

- [Share on Facebook](#)
- [Tweet about it](#)
- [Forward this email](#)

Please act for Ibbra before time runs out.