WHAT IF WE CAN?

Community fundraising stories from ten civil society organisations



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Foreword

This collection of stories is dedicated to everyone who wanted to make society or their neighbourhood a better place to live in and honestly wondered: Is this even possible? This emerged as the optimistic and daring reply to all dilemmas, misgivings, and doubts whether it is possible to work for the common good in a long-term, stable, and independent manner. What follows are the stories of ten civil society organisations proving not only that it is indeed possible, but rather that there are many ways to embark on this adventure yourselves using similar paths.

Although fundraising paths led each organisation on a different course and towards a different goal, they all started from the same point "A." This point was the Sustainability Academy programme that each of them attended in 2019. Trag Foundation has supported all those who dare to seek support for their projects in their communities for over ten years through this and other programmes. Each year a certain number of organisations first undergo a series of training sessions where they learn about the basics of fundraising and fundraising techniques. This is followed by mentoring and technical support to turn this theory into action, so they can focus on achieving the goals they set for themselves. If they succeed in this, they get additional wind in their sails by Trag Foundation matching the funds they already raised up to the equivalent of 4,000 Euros. The effectiveness of this system can be seen in the fact that in 2019 all ten organisations managed to raise a combined total of over 33,000 Euros from citizens, entrepreneurs, and larger companies in their communities.

The Academy may be the most important form of support provided by Trag Foundation to organisations that decide to rely on their own capacities, but it is certainly not the only one. Together with partners from the SIGN Network and within the Regional Sustainability Academy, the same knowledge is offered to civil society organisations in regional countries, coupled with somewhat more challenging goals for fundraising and strategic planning. Apart from the Academy, there are Successful Fundraising and Promising Philanthropy programmes, promoting innovative philanthropic and fundraising practices. Numbers also speak volumes of a kind of (quiet) revolution: 79 organisations from 35 communities raised more than 400,000 Euros by September 2021 through all of the listed programmes and these funds were matched by Trag Foundation. Of course - in order to be able to provide support it is important that you can rely on it yourself. This is why it is necessary to point out that programmes to date were implemented owing to support from donors such as the European Union, The Balkan Trust for Democracy, US Agency for International Development (USAID), Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN), and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

This publication originated with the idea to incentivise new non-profit organisations to embark on the challenging but rewarding path of community fundraising. That is why it answers the initial question: *Is this even possible?* with additional questions: *What if it is enough that we take courage, arm ourselves with patience and try? What if we do not have to wait for others to move us, but rely on ourselves? In simple terms, what if we can go ahead? it can be done?*

Since if we/it can - as these stories indicate beyond any doubt - then it is definitely worth a shot.

Trag Foundation

"Erasing Borders"

Asylum Protection Center, Belgrade

Are borders between people strictly delineated in mapmaking curves and razor wires or do solidarity and courage move and erase them? Are the borders of our own fears and prejudice insurmountable or can we as a community extend a hand to someone on the other side? These questions instigated a young group of lawyers, psychologists, and social workers to get in touch with United Nations and apply themselves to protecting refugees immediately after graduation. They set up the Asylum Protection Center upon return to Serbia and on the eve of the adoption of the Law on Asylum in 2007. *"At that time, we were the only ones who had experience and knowledge about asylum. Institutions were starting from scratch and we felt invited to contribute and protect the refugees",* one of the Center's founders Radoš Đurović recalls. He described the beginnings in one word – grassroots. With tremendous support from family and friends they managed to get offices and obtain the basics for their operation, and then took on approximately forty cases annually that they would work on with dedication after their day jobs. The fact that they could always rely on themselves and their primary support circuit will prove to be their greatest strength in many succeeding chapters.

> **The nexus between expertise and activism is crucial. Passion without knowledge cannot fully swing.**

A major international organisation became the chief donor to the Center in 2009, which gave them stability and leeway, but also showed its bad sides soon. *"While cooperating with them, in time we became increasingly familiar with what it means to be dependent on one dominant donor that has its own agenda, which in turn may not have any connection to your principles. Increasingly it interfered with our organisation's policy and in late 2011 we were at a crossroads: move on with them and become mere implementers of someone else's will or continue on our own and help people in a humane and ethical manner, the only way we believe still makes any sense,"* Radoš insists. It is clear what they did. It was not at all easy to break off with a donor of such size and reputation, but they knew they could go on alone because they started out alone. In the coming years they continued providing support to asylum seeker centres in Banja Koviljača, Bogovađa and Tutin, supporting the institutions, connecting with the media, networking local police forces, social work centres and other support providers, mobilizing volunteers and working with various groups of citizens. In short, strengthening their role in communities throughout Serbia. In that sense the volunteering network was always crucial for their operation, as they claim: *"If it is well focused and planned, help from volunteers is invaluable. It contributes a lot to increasing the organisation's capacities, especially in terms of technical, operational, and field duties. We have good cooperation with local and international universities. Many of the 400 volunteers that went through our organisation to date came from the Belgrade Faculty of Law, but they also came from Harvard and Columbia."* With the outbreak of the migrant crisis and the inflow of a huge number of refugees in need of legal, social, psychological, and political assistance, volunteers proved to be an invaluable resource. In their wish to solve the consequences of the crisis as soon as possible, donors focused their money to larger international organisations, effectively snuffing out a number of smaller initiatives and nearly destroyed the community's capacities to tackle these challenges alone. However, owing to support from family, friends, colleagues and volunteers, the Asylum Protection Center once again demonstrated that resilience in times of crisis lies in independence and expertise.

Three years later, at a moment they were starting to contemplate diversifying their funding sources and when they could surmise that existence will be increasingly challenging, they applied for the Sustainability Academy programme. *"The*

Academy helped us a lot to expand on our ideas of fundraising and learn how to develop the relationship with donors and the community, what tools and forms of support are out there... It helped us give a theoretical framework to what we were doing in guerrilla and intuitive terms", they say at the Center. Their campaign focused on the funds required to purchase a camper vehicle to serve as a mobile office and a means of transporting humanitarian aid. They knew that any public call for donations in a country facing a crisis that exceeded its capacities would provoke political connotations and potentially be counterproductive.

That is why they turned to the Global Giving worldwide platform and called upon their former volunteers from the ranks of foreign students. They said the following about the logic behind this decision: *"In a campaign you have to think who is the most likely person to help. Our beneficiaries are foreigners who, for the most part, do not linger for long in our country and - understandably so - there was no feeling that responsibility for solving this issue lays in the local community, at least not for the time being. Therefore, we turned to young lawyers, psychologists, alumni of the largest American universities whose trust we were sure we had since they got to know us through volunteering, and who simultaneously had the means to support us."* And they were right. With additional support from friends and corporate donors they had cooperated with before, they were able to raise the required funds in a short time and procure the camper which is in use to this day. Using experiences from the Academy, they continued fundraising and found new ways to reinforce their connections with donors even after the campaign. Not long after that they opened a bakery as a social enterprise which is - after two years of successful operation - nowadays yet another way to achieve sustainability.

After 15 years of work, innumerable tough lessons and experiences, they believe they found their answer to the question of how civil society organisations can survive. *"Just one source of income, such as one large donor, is rather limiting. On the other hand, project funding is not sustainable. The only good approach is to combine project funding, support from permanent donors, social entrepreneurship, and support from the broader public, if the topic allows. Putting together various sources of funding enables you to achieve security and independence. It is freedom nobody can take away from you."* And this freedom is won only - as their story teaches us - after we dare to erase some borders and draw our own.

ADVICE FROM THE SOURCE:

1. **Expertise inspires trust.** Expertise can be the only signal to those who do not know you personally that you will use their donations in the right way.

2. **Support from friends, family and acquaintances is invaluable.** Nobody made it on their own. Rely on a circle of your closest people as a constant fountain of strength.

3. **You are as successful as you are visible.** Cherish connections with the media, be a reliable source of expert information and you will always be able to count on their support.



“Heart in the Right Place”

Centar Srce (Heart Centre), Novi Sad

Unfortunately, any community has people fighting some difficult emotional and psychological battles. Fortunately, every community also has those fighting against taboos, against stigmatising mental issues and suicide, who are doing so through the strongest weapon in the world - conversation. People who are part of Novi Sad-based Centar Srce are like that. Although it originated in 1991 after an initiative from Novi Sad University professors as a form of support for people affected by war, soon it became clear that all parts of society need some psychological assistance and henceforth Srce declared itself a centre for the provision of emotional support and suicide prevention. Over the first years the number of users and volunteers - initially psychology students, but also anybody else who wanted to help - arose sharply.

We do not view donations as money that was given to us. It was entrusted to our care to be used for the right goal.

“Our volunteers are people of various ages, profiles, social and educational backgrounds. This multitude of walks of life is Srce’s core strength” - Slavica Ranisavljev Kovačev, Centre director points out. The centre’s work was and remains volunteer-based, and they would manage and wheedle to find offices and provide maintenance. As they say, this made their work easier but in some ways, it also limited them: *“We used one ten-meter-square University office and our costs were minimal. We always had just enough to survive and nothing on top of it. For nearly two decades we only aspired to keep the service going and be there for the ones who needed us, without thinking about the organisation and a secure funding source”* - Slavica adds. Doing such important work from one day to the next without support from the general public, the volunteers would in time lose heart and leave, and Srce was forced to cut down on working hours from nine to six hours per day. Although previously they never thought about fundraising, at that point it seemed to them the situation was changing: *“For a long time it was embarrassing to talk about mental health and suicide, let alone connect a brand or a name with the topic. But in time the tides turned. New generations came and they were more willing to talk about anxiety, depression, and fears; numerous counselling centres were opened; the national suicide prevention line was introduced, whereby the government showed it took responsibility. People gradually stopped blaming suicide victims for the act and increasingly started questioning the society’s role in it. In this U-turn of emotions from anger to sorrow and questioning, we as a society reached a point where we want to help and where it was possible for us to seek funding.”* This coincided with the 2019 Sustainability Academy. They admit that if it were not for the Academy and if it was not focusing so much on applying the lessons learned, they would probably postpone the entire endeavour for better days. Instead of this they decided that these were the best days, put their volunteers together, presented the goal to them and listened to their ideas. They decided to give everyone freedom to try their luck in what they believed in and see ‘what works.’ Their campaign started wide from day one and has not stopped spreading since.

At first one of the volunteers, a member of a pop choir, came forward with the idea of a charity concert. With their contacts in music circles this idea turned into a series of daytime and evening concerts that brought significant funds and a lot of attention from the public. Then they came to the idea of setting up a series of training sessions with the topic of ‘How can we help young people contemplating suicide?’ and inviting interested people to donate to the centre in lieu of education fees. The training sessions provoked high interest and the Srce team were glad, both for the funds and the opportunity to treat the topic of

suicide in a fitting manner. They held an auction of student paintings and took a donation box and their volunteers to Belgrade and the Exit Festival in Novi Sad on World Mental Health Day. They used their good cooperation with the media to tell the story of Srce and point out its importance for the community. *"First you think about some megalomaniac campaigns that are unfeasible, but as soon as you go ahead you understand that asking funds and services from others is a natural, human thing,"* Slavica said about their approach to fundraising.

However, the ball really started rolling when multiple individuals took on the responsibility to raise certain funds on behalf of Srce. Hence a girl joined the campaign on her own free will and raised donations by selling her craftwork on social networks, followed soon after by a tattoo studio that donated their entire daily earnings. A class from a local school donated to commemorate a classmate who took his own life, which was particularly emotional. They also had allies in individual companies and enterprises. However, they hit an unexpected high when they were called by a former volunteer wishing to donate sizeably larger offices in the city centre. The funds they raised, moving offices, better working conditions and all other activities that raised the Centre's visibility attracted new volunteers and restored their working hours. *"Coming into fundraising was our great turning point. The campaign extended the life of Srce by ten years and won three important victories. Firstly, we raised the funds and extended our working hours again. Secondly, we managed to change awareness in volunteers and prove to ourselves we were not sad and small but that what we were doing was important for the community. And finally, the campaign served as a way for the community to channel its support to mental health issues through dialogue, inclusion, and donations. A desire to do something about suicide was smouldering in the community for a long time, but nobody vocalised it before we did. And that is the greatest victory, greater than Srce itself"* - Slavica concludes. The fact that the association continued applying their lessons in practice to these days indicates that the Sustainability Academy programme did not offer disposable support, but rather a stake for their future. One of their greatest successes came about several years after the end of their campaign, and it was cooperation with Gillette and dm - drogerie markt and a joint campaign focusing on the importance of men's mental health.

Fundraising is not just a process of collecting money. It is often, like in this story, a way for the community to get engaged on a common mission. And if we are all on the same mission, then no contribution is too small: some people contribute by answering the telephone, others by donating, and yet others by spreading the word and tearing down taboos. There are countless ways, however as long as work is done from a desire to empower the community and everyone in it, everyone's heart is in the right place.



ADVICE FROM THE SOURCE:

1. **Rely on the community during your campaign.** You do not have to do everything by yourselves; it is only needed to sincerely ask for help and let anyone who wants to help do it in their own way.

2. **Your goal must be above everything else.** If you believe it is worth other people's time, effort and money, you will have no problem communicating this to others.

3. **If you lack experience in fundraising, feel free to try out a wide approach.** In time you will understand what goes well and what suits you, so you can narrow down your scope.

"Snowbal Effect"

Da se zna! (Let it be known!), Belgrade

'Da se zna!' association from Belgrade is dedicated to providing psychological support and legal aid to LGBT+ persons. It arose in 2016 primarily from the desire to document the violence over the LGBT+ community, to have it legally recognised and more easily overcome with the aid of psychologists. After two years of persistent work, they managed to receive a neglected, dark, and cold office from the Belgrade municipality of Vračar, located in what was once an education centre. Although it did not seem at all like the 'safe space' for those who are in need of support, they managed to see in it the future counselling centre for LGBT+ persons, their parents, and friends.

Asking for money connects the community - it tells us we are in the same issue together and that we need to set up a joint fund to solve it.

"From the beginning we have been looking for and building ways to raise at least some of the funds in the community. We have permanent individual donors and partner organisations whose help we can count on. We have a rich contact base that we constantly top up. We always sell cups, badges, and similar products at the Pride Info Centre. Every year we also organise several events where we raise funds from selling tickets", Aleksandar Savić, "Da se zna!" activist says and adds the following: *"When we applied for the Sustainability Academy in 2019, we already had a rather sturdy base around which we could weave a good strategy."* And that is exactly what happened. Soon after they began their campaign, several tens of thousands of people saw their call for donations through digital channels such as a newsletter, podcast, YouTube channel, Instagram, and Facebook. They would simultaneously sell branded mugs, emailed the benefactors from their database and organised a 'Coffee Day' in four cafes and invited their followers to donate to the Counselling Service through buying a brew. When asked how to approach people and ask for their help, the association says: *"Keep it simple, try to be honest and authentic, rather that resort to empty phrasing. People do not give to organisations; people give to other people. And that is why it is important that the community feels they are addressed by people who need the support."*

Each of these individual activities brought certain funds but all of them together also brought about something else - public attention. Moreover, attention from one particular company would give them a quite unexpected wind in their sails. Inspired by the organisation's mission, McCann marketing agency decided for their part and on their own accord to donate a campaign called "I (dis)own!" One of the hardest moments for LGBT+ persons is declaring their sexual orientation to family members, particularly in smaller communities where fear of public rejection is overwhelming. This is exactly where the idea came from about a series of confidential ads in national and local press throughout Serbia, where parents would publicly support their LGBT+ children. Immediately after their publication the confidential ads flooded the social networks, were all over the media and became the subject of a debate, while the campaign got a lot of support from the public and celebrities. For a mere couple of hundred Euros of media investment, the message had one and a half million views. *"So much attention helped us quickly raise the required funds and make the refurbishing of the Counselling Centre happen. However, it also brought us some new allies among LGBT+ persons' parents and families. Actually, it is important to realise this: each fundraising campaign is also raising awareness about an issue or about some marginalised groups. Therefore, each campaign is also an opportunity to build empathy."* - the association adds.

Donations kept pouring in during the following months as a consequence of the "I(dis)own!" campaign. A major tobacco company donated a large amount to them for additional furbishing and operation of the Counselling Centre, which brought

the total of the funds raised to six times more money than originally planned. *"Although it may seem that all of this happened by accident, I believe that is not the case. Fundraising is not a linear process; it is accumulated work. Like when you're learning a language for years, you learn the grammar and the rules, you think you don't know and then it just 'clicks' and you start speaking. And in fact, it did not just 'click' out of the blue, but as a result of a sustained effort. That is why it is important to always work, even when it seems there are no results. Especially then."* - one of the founders of the association Dragoslava Barzut commented.

The story about this association is the story about how the fundraising process often resembles a snowball starting an avalanche. The community would probably not have shown so much interest if it was not for the organisation's tireless and diverse work. Without the attention from the community, word of them would not so easily reach the marketing agency. It is doubtful whether they would gain new supporters without the agency's creativity and media coverage; whether additional corporate donations would follow and whether all of it would finally be returned to the community through the work of the Counselling Service. Aleksandar underscores precisely that side of fundraising:

"By raising funds you are also rallying people. You are engaging other stakeholders within society - individuals, companies, the media, and institutions - in your work directly so your battles and victories become theirs as well. Every donation, any contribution, every new friend, every gesture - could be small by itself but always leads to something greater."

ADVICE FROM THE SOURCE:

1. **Communicate honesty and humanity.** Stay away from phrases and what you think fundraising should sound like.

2. **Make a contact list.** Put every new person you can contact for support in it and soon you will have a database of partners and friends.

3. **Do not underestimate the importance of non-financial donations.** Perhaps such a donation will bring about the biggest step forward, like in our case.



“The Force is Always with You”

The Jedi Movement, Niš

What happens when an idea from the movie screen spills over into reality, and a group of people see themselves as heroes who actually have the superpower to change their city for the better? The answer to that comes from the Niš Jedi Movement that was established by Star Wars fans in 2015. Miloš Antić, the movement founder, says that for them the movie’s plot is primarily ‘a story of battle between Good and Evil, but also a story of the common man’. For nearly eight years the Jedi Movement has gathered people who know that any social change starts with individuals or - more precisely - Jedis, who are prepared to fight for Good in themselves and others, to keep learning and progress. *“The Jedi Movement is a safe house for visionaries, empathic leaders who are ready to create a more progressive and fairer society”* - Miloš says.

> **The Force is something that connects and permeates us all. It works on sincerity and giving. If you give, the Force gives back and opens all doors.**

The beginnings of the movement were marked by a Star Wars convention, conceived as an antidote against the general apathy in the city. Although they had no previous experience or knowledge on fundraising or on organising major events, the first convention was successfully held ‘fuelled by enthusiasm’, as they say. Their eagerness did not go unnoticed and soon people who were not fans of the franchise started joining them and in time the event grew into the renowned JediCon, held annually. *“The beauty of JediCon is that you can be whatever you want to be”,* the movement proudly states. Until now it had fashion shows by local designers, competitions for the best costume, gaming tournaments, inspirational speeches and discussions with the leaders, writers, chess players, hip-hop and street artists, and half of the proceeds would always be donated to charity. Miloš says the convention largely influenced the movement’s focus: *“After the first Con we made a decision that the projects we do will always serve as tools to develop our people. They are invaluable, actual experiences with organisation, teamwork, twists and turns, battles, and no arena is a better learning ground than this.”*

Although they gained experience with time, they were still doing everything intuitively and without a long-term strategy when they applied for the Sustainability Academy in 2019. Inspired by training sessions, discussions, and the people at the Academy, the Jedis came to an idea to implement a project focusing on the issue of educating children without parental care. *“The statistics are against them: only 36% of children from children’s homes regularly attend primary and secondary school, and less that 5% continue their education. However, the weight of growing up without parental support in children’s homes and foster families gave most of these children strength, persistence, and empathy. This is why we saw tremendous potential in them.”* That was the origin of the idea of a camp where these children would have the opportunity to adopt knowledge and skills and get to know people and organisations who can help them in further education and employment.

They had a clear strategy: to seek support from several companies and successful entrepreneurs based in Niš. However, all of their attempts found a disinterested but firm ‘no’ and they were left without funds they were hoping for and without a clue of a potential plan B. Rejection found them so unprepared that they spent days and weeks just thinking about their next step, actually not doing anything. As news would reach them of other organisations included in the Sustainability Academy programme raising the funds one by one, they snapped out of it in

the last minute and remembered that Jedis do not surrender without a fight. They made a booth and took to the streets, among people at Nišville, Film Meetings, Russian evenings, choir events, various tournaments, pub quizzes and all relevant goings-on around town. They overcame their shyness, swallowed the lump in their throats, approached their fellow citizens and sincerely asked for their support. They fought for each donor and every donation until they finally managed to raise the funds. Trag Foundation doubled their funds and soon the Jedis, in cooperation with the Niš Centre for foster care and adoption, organised a camp for children without parental care called 'The Force follows the Brave – Vlasina camp'. They now claim that their initial failure and surprise with it, coupled with the resolve to communicate what they believed to the community was the best thing that happened to them. *"I wouldn't change a thing. If we got the money from those companies right away, we would fund the camp and that would be it. This way we got high visibility, connected with our fellow citizens, and grown a lot through those activities. We became more resilient to rejection, braver and more perseverant in our mission"* – Miloš says. Although they were completely drained after this guerrilla adventure, they realised they could not lose momentum once they had it in their grasp. They continued with activities in the community and never regretted it. In 2019 the JediCon had the highest turnout to date. The following year brought about a global pandemic and owing to their good connections within the community the Jedis succeeded in raising a large amount of money to manufacture face masks only two days after the state of emergency was declared.

They proceeded to raise funds, connect with the community and simultaneously develop as an organisation. When they look over their shoulder, they say everything can come back to that moment of fear and uncertainty on the streets of Niš: *"All it takes for you to go out among the people is faith that people can be good and nothing else. You do not even need a booth. And when you feel in others this desire to do something for the community, when you see the strength of empathy, nothing will be the same for you again. Duško Radović said: 'I was a somebody and had something, now I'm a nobody with everything'. So, you're standing on the street as a nobody but in fact at the same time you are everything, because you represent goodness that people desire."*

ADVICE FROM THE SOURCE:

1. **Always have a strategy.** If you do not make a strategy of your own organisation, the question of who you are and what it is you do as an organisation will always remain vague and unclear.

2. **Be realistic when assessing your abilities and capacities.** Enthusiasms over an idea often makes us think we can do more than actually possible.

3. **Work on yourself.** If you constantly invest in your knowledge and learn from your experiences, you will become better.



“Freedom is Learned”

Faqirs from the South, Kruševac

In Bivolje, on the outskirts of Kruševac, just next to the Rasina river, lies a peculiar-looking building. What used to be the offices of the local football club and then a tavern that each of the townsfolk will have a story about, nowadays is the headquarter of the alternative cultural centre Gnezdo (Nest). In their desire to gather artists, activists and enthusiasts of this town under one roof and create - in a word - a common playground, the Citizens’ Association ‘Faqirs from the South’ decided to make their ‘nest’ there in 2017. *“We started as a small group of artists and registered as an association because we wanted to venture into the process of getting offices in a long-term, legal and serious manner. The football club building meant a lot to the entire community, and it was empty and run-down for a long time. At the time we came along, the administration and the townsfolk greeted us with open arms and said: ‘Why not? Maybe you young, crazy people actually do something!”*

> **You do not only solve problems, you bring back optimism.**

And they did: they turned up their sleeves, grabbed brushes and tools and got to work, and their energy soon mobilised the entire community. A company gave them pallets to make a stage, another company donated funds to repair the roof, many townsfolk donated their old furniture and appliances, and they organised an international volunteering camp in cooperation with the Young Researches of Serbia. *“These work drives, the foreigners who suddenly appeared there to help, the artists who painted the facade... It was all very exciting for Kruševac, where hardly anything ever happens. And these communities seem to be just waiting for something to happen to wake up”*, Faqirs recall and testify precisely about how these organisations are the best drivers of local change. Although the community did not understand the principles of self-organisation or the concept the Gnezdo was founded on, support was not lacking. Concurrently, this is one of the lessons that they immediately learned: *“If they believe you have good intentions*



and that you are doing something for the common good, people will approach you although they do not understand what exactly they are approaching. And once you're on the same side, you can set the rules together from ground zero."

After Gnezdo organised several winter concerts in jackets and hats and then closed its doors during the coldest months, it became clear that funds will have to be raised to install heating. This was precisely the project the Faqirs applied with to the Sustainability Academy. At first, they tried to approach local entrepreneurs and seek assistance from them but since they did not encounter understanding or any particular turnout, they decided to start afresh and stay true to themselves this time around. *"In fundraising you do not have to follow the templates, but you do have to follow yourself. Not all types of approaches fit everyone. Rules should not be applied by force, or blindly. On the contrary, it is much more important to start from what you are, what you can do, what you bring into the community and raise that to the level of a campaign",* Kaća Dimitrijević, one of the organisation's founders, highlighted.

In the case of Faqirs from the South, this meant turning to art and arming themselves with humour. At first, they made large apes out of plastic bags, placed them on trees around Gnezdo and invited people to donate for the preservation of the rare species - the 'Bivolje ape'. Then they shot a film about two swans who, swimming down the Rasina river, find their home in Gnezdo, sending a message how not all birds are migratory birds who fly away to warmer parts of the globe when winter comes, but that there are other species who must find ways to heat up the only 'nest' they have. However, their main attractions were the parties and concerts, where they were able to raise most of the funds through selling drinks. They came up with prizes to additionally motivate people to donate: individual donors won dream catchers and designer t-shirts as tokens of appreciation, the more eccentric ones received titles of the centre's honorary patrons, and the most generous donors got their names on deck chairs, symbolically guaranteeing that their place in Gnezdo is always waiting. Social network content, art installations, events, concerts, prizes and even the donation box were made in the shape of the building: each detail of the campaign broke the mould and conveyed the idiosyncratic and playful spirit of the alternative culture centre and Faqirs from the South. And when you ask them, they say that humour is the secret of successful fundraising. *"When you're getting to grips with some bigger, social issues, it is natural you feel small and helpless, but don't fall into the role of the victim. We did not mourn and weep because we don't have offices, but we came up with a positive, witty campaign because we believe it is important to give people hope again. Optimism makes people stay with you even after a particular problem is solved."*

When the bottom line is drawn, this approach to fundraising brought Faqirs much more than their original goal to provide heating. As they say, it brought them a community: *"In large cities there is a lack of space and a surplus of people, while in smaller towns there is a surplus of space and a lack of people. There aren't many creators and enthusiasts in Kruševac and, if you really want to gather them under a single roof, you have to win each of them individually. To us, fundraising proved to be the way to get people involved, because they naturally feel they are part of something once they support it with money or volunteering. In those terms, any amount is a sign you have a new partner and brother/sister in arms."*

If the experience of the Faqirs from the South can teach us something, it is that there are no universal recipes and keys for all locks in fundraising. The rules are there for you to hear them, learn them and then - adapt them to yourself. Because, you do not have to follow the templates, but you do have to follow yourself.

ADVICE FROM THE SOURCE:

1. **Pick a specific goal.** People will rather support a specific activity than the overall work of the association.

2. **Be imaginative and play in the campaign.** Creativity and humour will disarm and conquer the biggest grumps.

3. **Friends, followers and volunteers are of utmost importance.** That is the core from which the campaign spreads.

"People Can"

Obrenovac Youth Foundation

The entire Balkans was hit by floods in 2014 and brought with them what seemed to be a humanitarian disaster of unbelievable proportions. Obrenovac, a town where 25000 residents' lives were threatened and who were evacuated, was always a town where people cared for their community. A group of enthusiasts saw that the needs of children and the elderly will be neglected in the wave of aid arriving for the reconstruction of houses and infrastructure. The Obrenovac Youth Foundation was created under the motto *'Who if not us and when if not now'.* They like to say that they started out step by step but not from ground zero, seeing as they had years and years of experience in activism and the trust of the community and other organisations throughout Serbia. Opposed to what non-profit organisations usually face at the beginning, the Obrenovac Youth Foundation did not have to deal with fundraising right away: *"The true challenge for us was not how to reach funding but how to distribute the incoming aid in the best possible way. Due to the urgency of the situation Obrenovac was in, the funds kept coming and the circumstances were such that certain donors believed it to be more efficient to focus their money directly to activists and organisations in the field. Our organisation had already been recognised as trustworthy"* - Duško Krstić, one of the Foundation's founders, remembers.

Once the most extensive aftermath of the crisis was dealt with through joint efforts from organisations, the government, businesses and individuals, the Foundation found itself facing an important question: does that mean they fulfilled their mission or does the need remain to be the wings of initiatives in this area outlive the crisis? It was, of course, not difficult to answer this question. In the following year they created the Social Centre, conceived as a common space where children and the youth can spend time, study, develop, and socialise. Only a year after that they started to financially support initiatives by informal groups and organisations in their vicinity. However, perhaps because the road took them in another direction, for a long time they viewed fundraising as the 'awkward' part of the work, i.e. something that came least naturally. They finally broke the ice with their first fundraising campaign to reconstruct a facade on the school in Veliko Polje, a project they used to apply to the Sustainability Academy in 2018. The idea for this project came in a public call on social media, during which the public suggested and voted for buildings in need of reconstruction. Although the school was not elected in the end, the great support this idea received did not escape the eye of the people from the Foundation, as said by Jelena Ivković, the organisation's current director: *"Village schools often look decrepit, rundown, inadequate, and without a playground in the school yard. They are attended by few pupils and that is why they are not invested in, and these problems are dealt with only when it's too late. That is why this school was important to us. Because, regardless of the number of pupils or its urban or rural location, every child deserves equal conditions. Every child deserves a safe and healthy environment to grow in."*

> **Everything that is good comes out of the people's need to come together.**

They managed to get in touch with several larger economic operators through the local community council, and these were ready to support the project since they attended the school themselves. Besides, they claim their campaign was based on field work: *"The townsfolk were the ones who helped the most. They have a much better insight into the goings-on in the village, and companies trust them a lot, so this was the way we received many of our donations. The community should not be viewed just as potential donors, but also as good messengers, ambassadors, advisors and assistants."* Apart from this, public calls out on social media, television and the newspapers brought them donations in construction material and support from people in Serbia and abroad who remembered them from

the time of the floods and whose lives were directly connected with the school. They successfully exceeded the required sum in a short time and ultimately were able to refurbish the interior of the school as well as the facade. The fact that the reconstruction work drive mobilised an incredible number of volunteers and townsfolk is particularly emblematic. It turns out the school was originally built owing to donations from the townsfolk and a joint work drive, so the Foundation team could proudly claim that the foundations of philanthropy and solidarity were preserved to this day.

In terms of how different fundraising was from the viewpoint of a foundation, when compared the experiences of organisations and citizens' associations, Duško said the following: *"For a long time, foundations were not recognised as entities that require donations, especially because they forward these donations to associations. Besides, it is always easier to raise funds for a specific goal. However, over the previous years this perception has changed and people seem to understand the long-terms significance of having a fund in your area."* Moreover, after so many programmes and undertakings they implemented and supported, after the Social Centre, the Youth Fund, Neighbourhood Initiatives, and many others, they say the goal was never to just achieve the direct results. The change they are making is not just the change in the exterior of a school, infrastructure, a neighbourhood, or a playground. The change they are making is the change within the people. *"Fundraising help you nurture a sense of togetherness. When you support formal and informal groups, when you recognise a group of neighbours or a group of friends who have the wish to make their neighbourhood a better place, when you motivate and help them, you are also partly shaping the community and encouraging these people to step forward and take the reins. When these invisible, 'little' people become visible, then all of us together become an example. An example that - if we can do this, if a handful of common folks from the neighbourhood can make a change - others can do it, too. Then - people can."*

ADVICE FROM THE SOURCE:

1. **The changes you desire do not come over night.** Your biggest achievement is to persevere; then the values of the community are reinforced through the long-term process you initiated.

2. **The goal you are fundraising for does not have to be a big one.** If it is a purpose that your organisation feels strongly about and if it has real support from the community, even the smallest things will bring about much more.

3. **Think about who the potential donors to your initiative may be.** Do your research on them, how they can be reached and what approach would be most appreciated by them.



"We Are Batmen"

K-Town Grupa, Kosjerić

Kosjerić-based K-Town Group testifies to the fact that art has the power to change not only the world, but local communities as well. This association was established in 1996 with the goal of mobilising their community precisely through culture and art. If this was another town with a mere couple of thousand inhabitants perhaps this idea would not make any sense, but in Kosjerić it has survived for 25 years in full swing. *"Kosjerić is not called 'Serbian Seattle' for nothing",* Janko Belić, one of the K-town Group founders, says laughing and adds: *"This community is indeed small, but it is not stagnant. Kosjerić has a music scene with a bevy of alternative bands and a multitude of young creative people, full of enthusiasm and eager for events."*

The International Art Camp is one of these events, organised by the association for nearly twenty years. Every year, over twenty days in August more than thirty young people from the region, Europe, and the entire world, stay with local families and make music, poetry, murals, paintings, theatre plays, films, and everything else that comes to mind together with their peers from Kosjerić. This is how 146 kilometres Southwest from Belgrade various cultures that share the same passion for art and creativity meet here. Until now the camp was mostly funded through municipal public calls and other funds; however, it often required additional funding. This also happened in 2018 when they decided to turn to their community and seek support for the organisation of the art camp and eight concerts during their Summer of Music.

"The camp leaves a mark in the lives of everyone who go through it. Over these twenty years we've had new friendships, people fell in love, they become attached to Kosjerić and feel grateful for the entire experience long after everything is over. In some cases, the connection can be so strong that one of the girls even wrote her master thesis to this topic. That is why we had no doubts where to start with the campaign: first we turned to former camp participants, since we knew they would like others to share their experience" – Janko recalls. And indeed, a direct and sincere address to former camp participants bore fruit and confirmed that it is always best to start with the first circle of people who directly experienced the importance of socialising. After taking first base, a broader circle of individuals and companies from the district needed to be animated. They talked to the townsfolk, wrote emails, met entrepreneurs, handed out flyers, put up posters, searched for new contacts and managed to raise the rest of the money. As it turned out, the majority of their donors were born in Kosjerić, but lived and worked in other places: *"Sometimes local-patriotism continues to exist even after you move away. Many young people left here and scattered around the diaspora in search of education and jobs, but most of them feel the need to give something back to their hometown. We have been working for a long time and many of them remember concerts, workshops, and the various activities we put together and they believe us we want to keep Kosjerić going. By supporting us, they somehow feel their hometown will be all right."*

> **Fundraising is learned over time. Each consecutive iteration is better than the last one because even when you do not have success – you have lessons and new ideas.**

It is true that the fundraising techniques that the K-town Group came up with seem easy and simple, but only at first glance. In fact, they are quite demanding both mentally and physically, bearing in mind that several people need to be engaged in this work for a lion's share of days on end. *"Behind each of these 'we asked' is 'we made a plan, researched the community, found contacts, developed an approach, wrote an email, called, wrote again, enabled easy payment, thanked' and*

many other things in between. There is a lot of work here and we are like Batman - we do our regular jobs during the day and work for the association overnight. One needs to be prepared that it is not easy but that it indeed is, of course, worth the effort" – Janko points out.

Digitalisation and automation of donations definitely make this process easier, and the group is increasingly turning to them. Soon after they raised the funds for the camp and Summer of Music within the Sustainability Academy, they started raising funds for the Alternative Culture Centre - a sort of HQ for all associations, activists, and enthusiasts in Kosjerić. In the campaign they turned to donacije.rs and Global Giving platforms, which turned out to be a significantly more efficient option for them. Janko says the following about it: *"We are increasingly searching for ways to automate fundraising processes without losing the human touch. Hence we realised that donating with a click of a button is easier for people than reading long emails and filling out payment forms, and at the same time we were not spreading our capacities too thin on several fronts. In addition to this, the idea was for the Alternative centre to maintain itself through standing orders: donors can pick the sum they want to donate monthly, and it is automatically taken off their accounts; for us, this is certain income and stability. We are also contemplating a social enterprise as a way to hire a person from a vulnerable group and at the same time have another - albeit small - permanent source of income. We have many ideas how to enhance fundraising."*

Truly, there are as many fundraising techniques and paths as there are associations, but perseverance is the foundation of every one of them, even the most advanced ones. That is why it should be said that modern-day Batmen are not flying above the city but are on the ground day in day out, on the streets and among the citizens, where they are tirelessly creating a better society.

ADVICE FROM THE SOURCE:

1. **Everything is easier after the first results.** The donors need to see what they donated to and then they will help you again.

2. **The morning shows the face of the day.** If many people join you from the beginning, others will see it as a sign that the initiative is worthy of support and they will join. So start with your friends, beneficiaries, volunteers and partner associations.

3. **Do not be afraid to use technology.** Social networks and fundraising platforms can facilitate the giving process both for you and the donors.



“Pass it on”

Human Rights Committee, Vranje

As the proverb says, hard times create strong people, as is confirmed by the Human Rights Committee from Vranje. In the age of the greatest regime oppression and police brutality in the 90s, a group of people stood up to protect human rights to freedom of speech, reporting and opinion. They started from a living room and only in 2000 managed to get offices where they will provide free legal aid to citizens whose rights were violated. However, an ever-increasing number of calls and pleas they received came from women who suffered domestic violence. That was a red flag that prompted a group of women from the Committee to set up a helpline in 2002 for women victims of domestic violence from the entire territory of the Pčinjski district. The helpline did not stop working for a single day from then until today. *“For years we were funded by projects. Once the project stops or when there are no new calls we volunteered, made ends meet, got by and managed the best we could. We have not received a single dinar from the state, district, or municipality. Sometimes I don’t even know how we did it, probably from one day to the next, thinking - let’s see this through and then it will be easier”,* Suzana Ristić, one of the organisation’s founders, says smiling. Unfortunately, it only became more difficult. Signed in 2011, the Istanbul convention on preventing and combating domestic violence demanded all civil services must fulfil the same conditions in the national accreditation process. Some of the conditions, like the one that people answering helplines must have higher education, supervision of the quality of their work, must be employed full time and additional payment for night work, meant only one thing for the Committee: a drastic increase in operating costs and unfortunately shorter working hours as a consequence. Suzana said the following about this social defeat of sorts: *“How can a woman plan to get in trouble precisely between 12 and 4PM? Such short working hours speak volumes on how much the government, local authorities, and the society at large care about these women. It speaks of the patriarchy, the bureaucracy that overpowers empathy, the relationship that people in positions of power take to social issues and advancing the position of women, how gender equality is still just for decorative purposes in the plans and not in actions.”*

> **We are persistent, we ask for meetings, we make noise and we have been doing that for so long that we cannot just be ignored.**

Opposite to this view, the determined women from the Committee firmly believed that the helpline, like any other service, must be available around the clock. They needed support from the community to make it possible because, as Suzana adds: *“The helpline is not a portable tool you can take with you. It does not belong to me, or her, it is bigger than all of us. And we are fighting for the people to understand that it is something we all need.”* The Sustainability Academy came at the right time in their mission. Before the Academy, the occasional street-level activities, donation boxes and cooperation with flower shops on International Women’s Day left them without greater success, but with a strong desire to acquire the skill of community fundraising. For starters they decided to turn to local businesses for help in making their helpline available non-stop.

“In the beginning we would go to meeting ready to say it like it is, to let people know how much domestic violence is kept under wraps, how many victims there were, how many casualties. However, with that approach we only encountered harsh reactions, fear, aversion, and resistance. This approach only closed the door for us. It did not rouse empathy; on the contrary, it put up walls”, Suzana says. Many meetings with businesses ended before they actually started. Many others ended in rejection

or accusations, some even in tears. Although this was an emotional drain, they knew they had to keep on fighting, but also that they needed to change their tactics. Soon they addressed the businesses again, this time with an invitation to support a programme intended for women and girls that would involve various workshops and services, which also included the helpline. This mitigated approach enabled them to get their foot in the door and thaw the ice in several companies in Vranje and the district. However, the main twist occurred when they left the confines of their own district and spread the word far - to Belgrade, Niš, Novi Sad and other cities. *"We turned to friends and friends of friends. We called up former colleagues, volunteers, even mere acquaintances, we asked around for contacts in companies, searched for people from Vranje working in other cities. These were not great friendships, but many people did want to help. As soon as we changed our pitch, left Vranje and got this huge network of people working, we raised the funds in less than one month."* Some friends gave them direct donations, with words like: *"Finally I have the opportunity to help you."* Others connected them with someone else who can help. Yet others secured donations through companies they worked in, and yet others contributed to the cause simply by spreading the good word about their work. But every extended hand - whether it contained money, a business card or just inviting a handshake - showed the strength of connections between us and their possibilities.

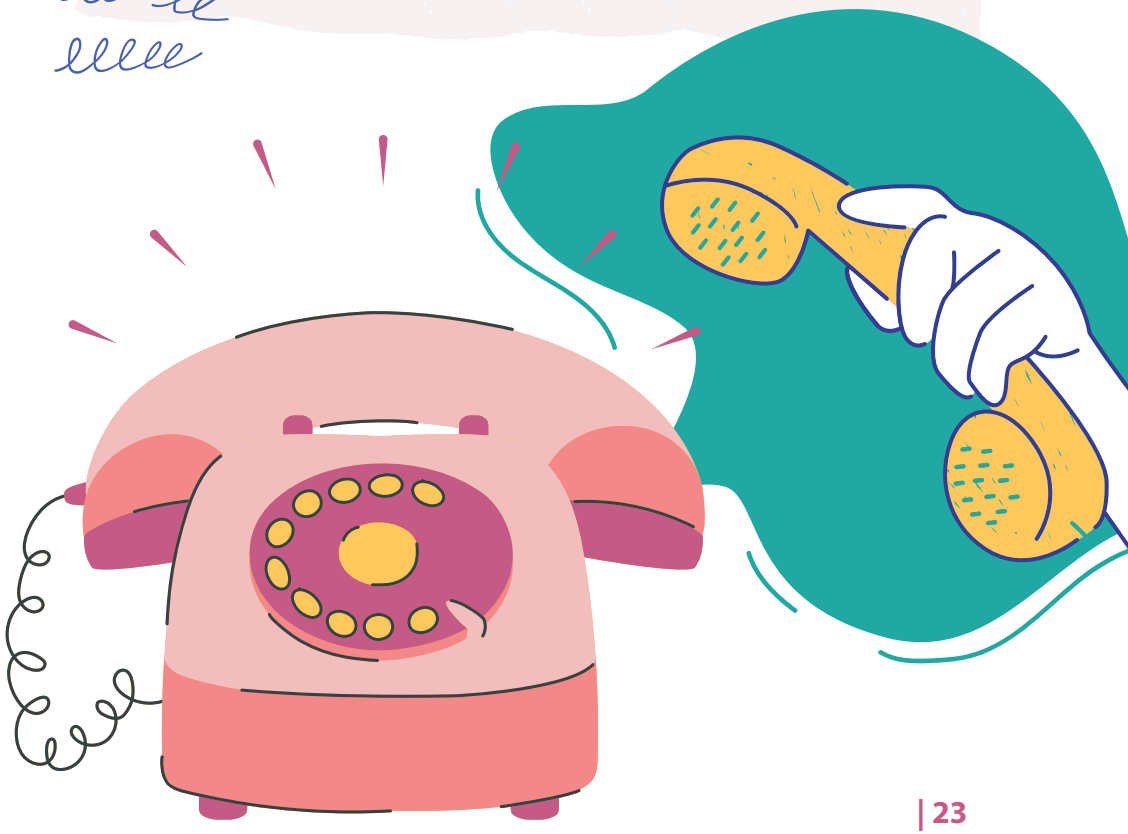
The Committee managed to extend the helpline working hours to 24/7 in 2019 and 2020. Unfortunately, as the funds gradually exhausted themselves, once again they were forced to cut down working time to four hours. This time they made this decision hoping they will successfully raise the funds to work around the clock again. *"It's good we went through all of that, the rejections and the struggle, because it made us stronger",* they conclude. They strengthened their network of associates at the same time. And in a society where few companies want to connect with the topic of domestic violence, where organisations for the protection of women are accused of increasing the number of divorces, where getting municipal or regional funding is like 'climbing the Himalayas' as Suzana says, it transpires that other people are the only ones we can rely on. Therefore, it is paramount that news about good things - especially good things in troubled times - are shared as much and as far as possible.

ADVICE FROM THE SOURCE:

1. **Not everybody thinks like you do but you can find a common language with anyone.** Formulate your messages and invitations so that people understand their meaning and see you as allies, rather than enemies.

2. **It's who you know.** Anyone you know can bring in support, one way or another.

3. **Put in time and delegate to others.** Fundraising is tiring, requires a lot of work and demands daily commitment of several people daily for some hours.



“In for a Penny, In for a Ball”

Okular (Eyepiece), Ćićevac

“If you work from the heart you will succeed, even if the entire world says you’re crazy!” - Okular’s Aleksandra Milutinović starts with a smile. Back in 2015 it may have been madness to imagine an association that will gather over 500 young people in an area, spread the idea of inclusiveness and strongly encourage activism among the children and youths. Despite their humble beginnings and few projects, each Okular’s achievement garnered great publicity. Human Rights Day celebration, games without borders called ‘Sports for Everybody’ and the first inclusive playground in Serbia echoed so much, they say, that there was no person in the area in 2018 who had not at least heard of this association.

As the organisation slowly grew, the need for their own space arose. They wanted it to be more than just an office: they wanted a place where the organisation will come to life, where volunteers and children can socialise and arrange things. That’s how the idea of an Inclusive house for the children came about. As a result of their passionate advocacy in 2019 they managed to get an office in the centre of Ćićevac that needed renovation and some furnishings. They applied at the Sustainability Academy in the nick of time and maintain to this day: *“If they hadn’t put out that call and if we hadn’t applied to it, all of this would never have occurred to us. It was and remains one of the most useful training sessions we attended in our lives.”*

They started raising the funds thanks to the gifts the children made, that passers-by could pay for by donating however much they wished. They say the following about these street-level activities: *“That was where we learned to overcome our fear of rejection. Many people who are not interested in helping will simply pass you by. But if you never ask for help, people who might be interested and who may even join you will pass you by as well. Or perhaps someone will walk by four times, only to really hear you the fifth time. That is why you need to persevere.”* And they did: they put up their stand everywhere, offered their wares to people they knew, sold door to door and even decided to try their luck in Vrnjačka Banja. The bigger town seemed to them a bigger opportunity, but it soon turned out that even there only people who followed their work would donate. Then they confirmed the lesson from the Academy - those who know you, give to you! - and decided firmly to find new ways to connect with their community. They no longer had the luxury to spend time and energy on small-time activism. It had to be something big, an idea so crazy that it cannot fail. The first ball in the history of Ćićevac!

Sounds like a cliche but it is true: never give up and you will always find support. Be persistent and make it impossible to be ignored.

If it were an ordinary party of concert, the idea would not be nearly as successful. Only the idea of a ball was so bold, magnificent, and unheard of for this small town of ten thousand residents that virtually nobody wanted to miss it. And indeed, on that evening in May 2019 all influential locals, successful entrepreneurs, and representatives of companies from Ćićevac and the district came to the newly opened hotel decorated at the last minute, dressed to the nines. Some of them were personally invited, others were reached by acquaintances and yet others invited themselves. They left nothing to chance, in order to raise as many funds as possible. They received some of the donations from ticket sales, but they also planned other activities for donors, one of which ‘stole the show.’ It was a public auction at which each guest could ‘purchase’ the symbolic bricks, windows, and tiles of the future Okular premises. Starting with the first brick the donors competed for the price, who will buy the

pillars, who will sign the door and who will take credit for the chimney. Every piece of this symbolic inclusive house from the foundation to the roof soon bore the name of at least one donor. *"The competitive note really inspires people to show themselves in the best light. And if it's for a good cause, you can't fail"* - as they say now about their idea's success. Other than that, they held a 'silent' bidding of artwork and photographs made by children and youths, and to their surprise all the artwork was finally purchased by the hotel, and they adorn its walls to this day. They were also surprised by the mayor of neighbouring municipality of Varvarin who collected donations from his citizens in the days before the ball and arrived with a hefty sum. The ball lasted until the small hours and while the guests partied and danced like never before the photographer captured every moment tirelessly and at the end of the night decided to donate all proceeds from sold photos. *"Our advice is to gather as many people who can help as you can fit in one place. Give them a good excuse they will not want to miss, like a ball. And then when everyone is there, do not count on sheer luck but think of how you can include as many of them as you can in your goal. That is the whole secret"* - the association adds.

The entire area was abuzz about the ball in Ćićevac long after that night, and the donations kept coming in. It turned out the organisation raised even more money from the people who did not attend the ball but wanted to give their contribution nevertheless. When the confetti finally settled and the bottom line was drawn, Okular managed to exceed the targeted amount, furbish the offices owing to the funds raised, but also continue funding their activities as well. The ball is still remembered and told of even now, just like the lesson learned - if you intend to change the world, get the people going and do something really big, sometimes you must not settle for anything short of an insanely bold idea. In other words, in for a penny– in for a ball!



ADVICE FROM THE SOURCE:

1. It's not true that it can't be done. We raised a considerable sum of money in one of the poorest municipalities in Serbia. If we could do it, anyone can.

2. Every activity will get you funds or friends, and both of these gifts are valuable. This is how our street activities raised less money but brought us volunteers and beneficiaries.

3. Always ask. Those who do not ask shall not receive. And fear of rejection dissipates quickly.



“Three, Two, One – Go!”

Satibara, Beograd

“Film and industry are, in my opinion, mutually exclusive. It should not be possible to simply order art like any other goods, nor should it be exclusively left to high productions. We are a group of people who share values, rather than an industry. We believe in freedom of expression and the common right to visual expression, especially if they are less visible”, Marija Rodić, one of Satibara’s founders, begins her story. This citizens’ association was founded in 2011 when several theatre and film artists and sociologists decided to fight for a better society through film. For the first five years they mostly made auteur films on a wing and a prayer and in 2016 they launched their first project with the community - the inclusive cinema club “My Closeup”. This programme enabled teenagers from vulnerable groups, such as those without parental care or from the margins of society to reflect on the issues within the community, their role in it and their own relationship to growing up, tolerance, future and their potentials by creating their own short films. The programme was mostly project funded; however, due to uncertainties related to funds and public calls they decided to apply to the Sustainability Academy programme in 2018 and get into fundraising.

“Perhaps it was enough for us to ‘dip our toes’ during the Academy, just to see how we feel about the process. However, us being us, we dove right in, head first!” - Marija says, laughing. When asked what was stopping them to try out fundraising before, they said they hesitated to ask for art when there were so many other burning issues. *“We wondered if our place was among philanthropists at all. We thought philanthropists always make sacrifices and we enjoyed ourselves in the creative part, in making friends and art. However, talking it over with the young people we worked with, we understood how much it meant to them, how much it opened and changed them, how much they grew through our workshops. They helped us understand how tremendously important working with children and the youth is for the society”* - Marija underscores.

This time they started raising funds directly from individuals. Although before, as they admit, they would not dare walk up to old acquaintances, former colleagues, even friends and ask for money, now they plucked up their courage. The turnaround in their approach occurred when they understood that the goal they were asking money for was greater than themselves: *“You overcome your qualms when you understand it is nothing personal. You’re not asking [for the money], the campaign needs it. You’re just the messenger.”* Individual donations brought the bulk of the required funds, but the events and parties brought great visibility. That is not surprising since each of them was captivating, to say the least.

Fighting windmills can be exhausting. And always in the end you tell yourself it is the last time you took up this task. And you always get back in it again.

The first in a series of events was a charity dinner where film and theatre celebrities who long-time were friends of the association acted as chefs. Apart from the food and drinks, the celebrities would bring personal artifacts from the film industry, like a typed screenplay or a T-shirt from the set of a famous Yugoslav movie that were sold at an auction after the meal. Many friends and acquaintances came, as well as a multitude of people who just happened to be there on that particular evening. The night ended with loud karaoke and a birthday cake for one of the girls from the film workshop. *“It was important for us to include the children in the fundraising process, which would not be possible if we negotiated with companies,*

for example. In this way the kids were a part of the struggle the entire time, counted donations and cheered on every step" - Marija adds.

Their other event was not planned but it seems it was 'written in the stars'. After the charity dinner echoed in art circles, an unexpected invitation came for them to appear at a children's fair and put up a stand and a donation box. Long after the fair and the entire campaign Satibara will receive support calls because they charmed people somewhere at their events, and they say the following about it: *"Be yourself, somebody is bound to like it."*

The charity night in Le Studio theatre ensued with a play, concert and open jam on the repertoire, with another charity night in a popular town cafe soon to follow. On the occasion they set up a screening of documentaries made by their colleague, followed by a charity bingo with an assortment of creative gifts - ranging from film posters to an improvised figurine of a golden lion, spray painted at the last minute. After all the fun, the guests saw a fire dance performance in the cafe patio. It could be said that the campaign ended just as it began: successfully and fiery. Although the campaign raised the required funds and enabled them to have an inclusive cinema club, Marija emphasizes that spontaneity was their guiding star throughout the process: *"It was important that the events are close to us and the people we knew. We could not put together a gala dinner with bow ties when we are not such kind of people, nor do we have such people around us. Perhaps it is not good to always do the things that are consistent with you and never leave your comfort zone, but from our experience the best avenue to take into something unknown, such as fundraising, is through something familiar and easy."* Truth be told, not every detail of the event was strategically planned; they would often be pulled by a sudden surge of creativity or the sudden, odd idea. That is why they say if they went back in time to those days, they would try and focus on reducing the content rather than overloading their events with a number of activities. However, true to their nature, they cannot guarantee that they would succeed in this effort.

If fundraising was a film, at least according to their experience, they say it would probably be an action flick with some thriller elements in it, stacked with cliff-hangers and unexpected plot twists, but with a happy ending. The film whose making would be exhausting and challenging, but still the kind of experience that would make you hardly wait for the clapperboard and the word - action!



ADVICE FROM THE SOURCE:

1. **If you are fundraising for the first time, start with something you know.** Do not go chasing after huge multinational companies or foreign donors, turn to your friends and a familiar environment, because they will do the best job of encouraging you to keep up.

2. **Fundraising events are a way to become more visible.** Even if they do not yield many donations, they will be relevant in the long run.

3. **Be smart when spending your time and resources for the campaign.** Do not go everywhere at once, do not lose yourself in the details, but always have somebody who will keep your focus on the goal.

CAPTURED NOTES



Always ask.
Only those who do not ask will surely not receive. Everything else is possible.



You do not have to follow the templates, but you do have to follow yourself.
There are a million ways for you to raise funds, pick the one that feels right.



Think of a good strategy.
But be prepared to change and adapt it when things come up.



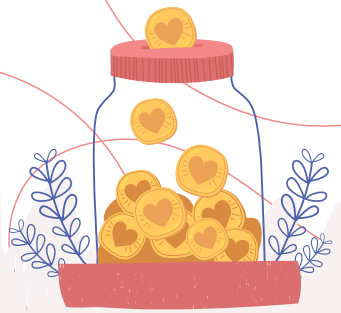
The goal you are fundraising for does not have to be a big one.
Sometimes even small initiatives kickstart large events.



Friends, followers, and volunteers are of utmost importance.
That is the core from which the campaign spreads.



Do not be afraid to use technology.
Social networks and fundraising platforms can make the entire process easier for you and the donors.



Do not underestimate the importance of non-financial donations.
Perhaps such a donation will bring about the biggest step forward.



Events are a way to become more visible.
Even if they do not yield many donations, they will bring audiences.



Expertise inspires trust.
Expertise can be the only signal to those who do not know you personally that you will use their donations in the right way.



Not everybody thinks like you do but you can find a common language with anyone.
Formulate your messages and invitations so that people understand their meaning and see you as allies.





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