



Lokabandhu 07852 281750
FWBO Development Team

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Dear ---,

These are some notes from me about how you might, if you wished, raise funds for your FWBO/TBMSG Dhamma project using the internet.

Specifically, the FWBO Development Team now manages two accounts with a company called JustGiving (www.justgiving.com). One is owned by the Indrajala Trust and is for projects in the FWBO in Europe. The other is owned by FWBO Dhammaloka and is for FWBO/TBMSG Dhamma projects in India or Nepal. JustGiving enables people anywhere in the world to raise funds using the internet.

I hope you find this document useful, I would be very happy to dialogue with you about the best way you could make use of one or another of these accounts, if you are interested to. I would also be happy to try and answer any questions – however I am also a beginner!

The inspiration for both accounts was to help FWBO/TBMSG ‘growth’ projects around the world to access dana from the wider sangha. To give a little bit of history - the FWBO Growth Fund was for the past four years a primary source for funds for FWBO/TBMSG ‘growth’ projects in Europe, India, and the rest of the world. Thanks to generous donations by Windhorse:Evolution it was able to give away over £100,000 between 2004-8. However Windhorse have said that in 2009, and for the few years following, there will most likely be no money available from them for the Growth Fund as they are making substantial re-investments in their business.

Although it no longer had any funds to give away, the Growth Fund Committee wanted to do what it could for FWBO/TBMSG ‘growth’ projects, and asked Lokabandhu to look into other sources of fundraising. In dialogue with Siddhisambhava, the FWBO Fundraiser, it was agreed that he would explore internet fundraising, and the two JustGiving accounts are the results of this. Now that they are created, they can of course be used for any project that matches the charitable purposes of Indrajala or Dhammaloka.

I am seeing my role in this initiative mostly as a facilitator, ie creating and managing facilities that anyone can use. I am also happy to offer advice to the best of my ability. I can’t do much if any actual fundraising – that will have to be done by people from each project. Besides assisting others in creating their own appeals on JustGiving, my main role will (I think) be in promoting the FWBO Growth Fund itself as distinct from promoting any particular project: we still hope to raise some funds that can be used according to the discretion of the Committee.

I’m personally convinced that JustGiving is a powerful and exciting new tool that our pioneers and entrepreneurs can use to raise funds from our wider Sangha. In fact a variety of TBMSG projects in India have already raised over £12,000 using it. A great advantage is that those leading projects can live anywhere in the world, eg India, whereas their supporters can also live anywhere in the world, ie UK, USA etc... That ability to transcend distances may be particularly valuable to you once you’re ‘out there doing it’. All that’s needed to connect you and your supporters is clear communication, the internet and a credit card... It allows information and inspiration to flow one way – from you to them, and money to flow the other – from them to you!

I would welcome comments and critical feedback on the notes that follow. What was helpful – what could be added or dropped? Please let me know by writing to me at lokabandhu@fwbo.org. I would also like to know how you get on – a successful project will be an inspiration to others, and we can all learn from one another’s experience.

In what follows, any specific details that refer to **Indrajala I have put in red**; any that refer to **Dhammaloka I have put in blue**. When using JustGiving, it’s very important to link yourself to the right one!

With all good wishes,

Lokabandhu
(Movement Development Coordinator, FWBO Development Team)



A Guide to fundraising using JustGiving

(an internet fundraising technique)
notes by Lokabandhu

There are four sections to this Guide:

1. Your Case for Support.
2. Your JustGiving Page
3. Your Publicity
4. Your Strategy.

There are some notes on each below, plus some background information on JustGiving itself and how it works. I would be happy to answer any questions – however I am also a beginner!

I suggest you take a little while to read these notes, then reflect on how you want to approach your appeal. Time spent planning is always time spent wisely. As Siddhisambhava (the FWBO Fundraiser) says – “Fail to plan; plan to fail!” if you haven’t thought things through, you may hit problems in the middle of your campaign; these could limit or damage its success.

1. Your Project and your Case for Support:

This is number 1 because it is so important! Your Case for Support is your answer to the questions - What exactly is it that you are fundraising for? And why should people give to you? And why should they give now? It is crucial that you are really clear about these questions, and able to answer them simply, clearly, and with confidence.

A very good exercise is to take a blank sheet of paper and try to write out simply and clearly your case for support. You may find it surprisingly difficult! It will take work and thought. If you are a team it will be even harder, because your case for support will have to be developed in consensus – and this will almost certainly take quite a bit of time and may even become emotionally heated at times. All the more reason to persevere with really getting it clear!

If even it is slower, there are many benefits to developing your Case for Support through consensus-building in your team – for example, due to the numbers of people that will be involved in the discussions, you are more likely to be able to see things from the points of view of your donors. There are many reasons people give and it’s important to understand them well.

In developing your Case for Support do remember to focus on the benefits of your appeal and not its features. For some general advice on this and other matters please see <http://fwbo-centre-support.org/wp-content/uploads/an-introductory-guide-to-fundraising.pdf>.

Once you've prepared your case for support, you might like to try showing it to a few friends and let them play the role of someone who's interested but not quite sure if they are ready to support you – let them question you about it, then revise it as needed.

When writing your case for support please bear in mind your project needs to fit in with the overall charitable objectives of either the **Indrajala Trust** or **FWBO Dhammaloka**. Both are registered charities in the UK. Indrajala is run by the **European Chairs Assembly** and its JustGiving account must be connected to **Dharma projects in the UK or Europe**. Also, if the project is being run by an existing charity, they should really set up their own account with Justgiving – as the LBC and Karuna have done. This probably means that the Indrajala account is most suited for small or new Dharma projects in Europe. FWBO Dhammaloka is run by a group of Trustees including Lokabandhu, Karunamati, Turanya, and Amoghacitta; and raises money for **Dhamma work in India and Nepal**. If you wish to use either JustGiving account the project must fit under one or another of these umbrellas – if in doubt, please discuss with Lokabandhu first. The Trustees of both reserve the right not to accept any appeal using JustGiving if the project it is raising funds for is deemed unsuitable.

2. Your JustGiving fundraising page:

Creating a fundraising page on JustGiving is very easy. First register it, then add your details.

registration

To register your page go to www.justgiving.com/fwbo/raisemoney or www.justgiving.com/dhammaloka/raisemoney - ie choose whichever of our two accounts is appropriate. The link will automatically link you to the appropriate charity (Indrajala or Dhammaloka). You can then to register yourself with details like your email and address.

When you go to actually create your page it asks what type of page you want – the best answer for us is “other” – this gives you the most simple starting-point ie a blank page.

the page name

You need to choose a suitable name for your page, ie what the XXX should be in www.justgiving.com/XXX. When choosing it you basically need to decide whether your page name should refer to you personally or the project. Either is possible but obviously a page named after you is more personal and will appeal more to your personal friends; a page named after the project will appeal more to people interested in that project. Real-life examples of each are www.justgiving.com/harshaprabha and www.justgiving.com/refugetree.

Once you've registered your page name, save it and then go back to the editing screen. Now you can add your text describing your project and appeal. Basically your page can contain a write-up of the project and/or people involved, and one main photo. So I suggest giving both of these a lot of thought. Probably the best is to be simple, confident, and clear, letting the project as it were speak for itself – and be sure to use your Case for Support as the basis.

what you say on your page

The exact wording that you put on the page is crucial and needs careful thought. I suggest that first of all you write out what you want to say in your word-processing programme (eg Word) and only then go on the internet. Then you can simply cut and paste the text onto your JustGiving page. When deciding what to say, remember the objective is to inspire all visitors to your page to click on the large button marked “Donate Now”! So be simple, clear, and direct! If your case for support is clear then your text should flow reasonable easily from that.

Please save your work regularly as you go along – after 20 minutes the JustGiving computer automatically logs you out without telling you and your work may be lost! This is another reason to write your text out first. If for any reason creating the page is problematic I can register it for you; I would then hand over the access codes to you or someone you choose to administer it.

With regard to the text of the page, if your supporters have a personal relationship with you then I suspect the details of the project are less important – it is YOU they are supporting. However if they don't have a personal relationship with you then the project itself must be inspiring. Which approach you take will probably affect the text you write and which picture you choose for your page – ie a photo of you, or of the project....

Either way, you also have a choice between writing only about you/the project itself, or advertising something impressive that you intend to do as a fundraising event. In Britain at least there is a strong tradition of 'sponsored activities' to raise money for funds - basically the fundraiser personally undertakes to do something a bit difficult, or demanding, or unusual, in order to raise funds – their supporters then give them money because they recognise the effort they are making. An example is to run a certain distance, or sit in an all-night meditation, or wear a dress for a day, or shave your head – anything is possible! A good example is www.justgiving.com/simonandtim where Simon and Tim, two mitras at the LBC, ran a marathon to raise money for the LBC and raised over £3,000! However it is also possible just to write about the project. It's your choice, both approaches have been successful...

saying thank-you

Your page allows you to 'pre-write' a 'thank-you' letter that will be automatically sent to everyone who donates money via your page. Please make sure you do this - it is very important. The place you do this is down the bottom of your page editing screen and is easy to miss. However do take care over this – in fundraising, saying "thank-you" is crucial. The people who donate to you are (by definition) your supporters. They have given you their money, which they have probably worked hard to earn, and they are trusting you to use it well. In effect, you are now in a 'relationship' with them – recognise that and nurture it. Your donors are well worth cultivating and staying in regular contact with.

There's lots of ways to use the 'thank-you' letter - for instance after thanking them you can ask people to be ambassadors for the appeal, or to visit your main website, or to give a bit more... Or you may wish to make a pledge to your supporters that you will stay in touch... it is worth mentioning that there is a facility in JustGiving to send an email to all your donors at any time – you may want to use this later to send an update to your donors, asking them to give a bit more or to pass on news of how you are doing.

When creating your page you choose a fundraising target. Be realistic – if necessary it can be changed later. Of course the page also includes a big button marked "Donate Now"! This leads to a page where they can make a one-off donation to you. Make sure that in your text you clearly ask people to click the button and make a donation immediately.

It IS possible also to use JustGiving to make a monthly standing order donations but unfortunately only to the charity itself not to a particular project. If you want to ask people to do this, tell them to go to www.justgiving.com/fwbo/donate or www.justgiving.com/dhammaloka/donate. If you want to use this facility you'll have to let people know of these links as well as the direct link to your page – and when the money comes in, we will have to make sure we allocate your regular donations to your project. Of course regular donations are much more valuable in the long-term and should be encouraged if at all possible...

Finally, if you want to, on your page you can host other photos and even a video – see www.justgiving.com/varaprabha for an example. I would suggest these are not really worth bothering with, – it's up to you of course. Anything you add can be changed later.

3. Your Publicity

After you have created your page, you won't start getting money by magic! You need to publicise your page. Without this, nothing will happen. There are several aspects to publicising your page – who can you promote your appeal to? What exactly will you say to them? And once the appeal is launched, how can you keep the momentum going?

Quite likely, most of your publicity will be via letters to your supporters – and of course email makes this very easy, cheap, and international. But the wider you can spread the news of your appeal, the more money you will raise. So, ask yourself how can you reach more people? Also you may well need to contact people several times before they are ready to give – it is worth planning a series of letters extending over the duration of the appeal; each will have news of the project, maybe some extra details – different things to keep your message fresh and interesting. In this way you will hopefully be able to contact people several times without offending them. This leads into strategic questions – see section 5. Here we are thinking simply about getting going – but it's good to have an idea of what you're going to do next.

When thinking who to contact, you will probably naturally begin with the people in your email address book and those of your team. However don't just send a mass-mailout to everyone saying "give me money!" There will almost certainly be more effective strategies. Apart from anything else there is no point asking everyone for money as only those with credit cards will be able to respond via JustGiving. However, if people can't give they may still be able to help spread the word - for instance, you could ask some people to serve as ambassadors – to pass on your appeal to their friends with a personal recommendation. So it is good to think through who you are able to contact and what is the most useful thing to say to them. There will be different messages for different audiences.

There are many ways to publicise your appeal as well as emails. Ideas are posters, word-of-mouth, Buddhist magazines and websites, public newspapers and radio, and more. You may be able to promote your project and simply mention the JustGiving page at the bottom – this could be very effective. Be creative!

At the same time, keep it simple and brief. Use your 'Case for Support' as a basis. If this is clear, the appeal letter you write should more or less flow out of it. The letter(s) don't need to be long or complex - you're really just introducing yourself and your appeal, and asking people to visit your fundraising page. You can therefore probably keep them quite short. Of course you will need to say something about the nature of your appeal, but you can leave many details for the JustGiving page itself – and the real details can go elsewhere again, eg on your project's webpage. What is important is to communicate some sense of excitement and also urgency – say why your appeal matters, and say why it's important to respond to it immediately.

clickable links

In the letter there's one thing it's very important to get right: people must be able to click on the link in your letter to go direct to your JustGiving page. It's therefore **very** important to make sure the link to the fundraising page stands out very clearly and is clickable. Seek expert advice if you don't know how to do this – and test it before you mail everyone! Clickable text will probably appear as underlined and blue on your computer screen – eg www.justgiving.com/sanghaloka. Of course you can make it bold and big and red if you prefer – just make sure it's clickable!

your first donations

When your letters are all ready, you're ready to start sending them out.

A good tip is to first send them to a few people from whom you expect generous donations, these will be immediately visible on your page which means everyone else will see them – and will hopefully be more likely to give comparable amounts!

4. Your Strategy

Appeals can run on JustGiving for up to two years. When you send out your first wave of letters, you will probably get a rush of donations. Nityabandhu and Vimalanath both managed to raise over a thousand pounds each within a week of launching their pages; Chandrabodhi nearly as much. After the end of the first week, however, if you do nothing else, you will probably get very little more coming in – most people will either respond straightaway or not at all.

So you need a strategy to keep your appeal alive and to persuade the maximum number of people to get around to actually giving.

This requires a strategy to sustain the appeal over time; and as usual the more thought you are able to give this in advance the better. As already mentioned some general advice is available at <http://fwbo-centre-support.org/wp-content/uploads/an-introductory-guide-to-fundraising.pdf> . JustGiving's own tips are at www.justgiving.com/Account/Resources/resource_pop_up2.asp.

There's lots of scope for creativity when creating your strategy. However, to put it rather crudely, the fundraising process boils down to persuading people to visit the webpage; then persuading them to click on the 'donate' button when they do!

repeated approaches

It is fine to approach people several times – if you do it right. In fact, it will almost certainly be necessary. Be aware that if you approach people clumsily you may irritate them – so plan your communications carefully and thoughtfully. Think of a way to say something fresh each time. Keep a clear record of your communications with people, and their response, and make sure you say something appropriate next time - for instance if someone has already given, acknowledge that before asking for more. And if they haven't given anything yet, phrase your letter as a polite reminder and include some news. One way of looking at this is to consider that you have a relationship with all your contacts, and you must make sure the relationship remains healthy – respectful and positive.

alternative approaches

you might like to consider using several approaches to reach people with your message. Your appeal will have more impact if people hear about it from several sources - via newsletters; on noticeboards, and through personal messages.

conflicts between appeals?

The question might arise – if there are many fundraising appeals in the Movement all using JustGiving, won't they all clash and conflict?

What I am hoping (and expecting to be the case) is that each of the dozen or so fundraising projects currently going on around the FWBO will have their own circles of supporters and so there will be room for everyone. That is one reason to be imaginative when thinking who to approach – please do what you can to widen the circle! I estimate there are 15,000 people on FWBO mailing lists in the UK alone.

If two or more projects do emerge that seem to be almost identical, or potentially in conflict, we may suggest you talk to one another before using JustGiving. This is so that you will both be able to present a clear message to the wider sangha.

Conclusion

To conclude - if you are interested to create an JustGiving fundraising page, whether linked to the Indrajala Trust or to FWBO Dhammaloka, you are welcome to do so, subject to the conditions mentioned above. If you wish to, I would suggest considering all five headings above for the appeal to be successful - your Case for Support; your Page; your People; your Letter; and your Strategy.

Finally just to say – good luck!

Some details: how JustGiving works

The Indrajala Trust and FWBO Dhammaloka both have accounts with JustGiving (www.justgiving.com). For this each pays JustGiving £15/month. This entitles both to create an infinite number of fundraising pages. Each fundraising page must relate to the charitable purpose of each charity.

Money can be donated by anyone in the world who has access to an international credit card. So the fundraising pages act as a 'gateway' which gives any project, however remote, access to an international pool of potential supporters, inside or outside the Sangha.

Any money donated via the site is collected by JustGiving and regularly paid over to the Indrajala Trust/FWBO Dhammaloka. The money, when paid to us, is clearly itemised. This means that it is easy for us to keep track of what is due to the different projects. We will treat the income from your appeal as 'restricted funds' meaning that apart from taking a small levy for our administrative expenses we cannot use it for other purposes.

transferring the money

Once Indrajala/Dhammaloka have received your money, it can be transferred to you by whatever route seems best. Note that this may involve some expense. Giftaid is also collected if appropriate, however it takes 2-3 months to come from the Government and we can only pay it to you after this.

If your project is at a very early stage and not ready to actually begin spending the money, we may suggest that Indrajala/Dhammaloka keeps it until your projects' plans are more developed. This is because as charities, we have a duty to the members of the public who donated the money to ensure that it is used correctly. As already mentioned it will be treated as 'restricted funds' and cannot be used by us for any other purpose.

receipts and reports

As part of transferring the money, we will ask you for two things – a receipt for the money and, later, a report on the project itself. If appropriate we will hope to use the report on FWBO/TBMSG News.

admin expenses

Not all the money raised by your page will be paid over to you. JustGiving take a 5% commission of all money donated but I am happy with this – other sites take up to 10%. Also, both Indrajala Trust/Dhammaloka will also need to make some deduction in order to cover the subscription to JustGiving and also for their bank charges and other administrative expenses. These may total up to 5% of your donation, in addition to the 5% taken by JustGiving. However – and this is a big 'plus' - JustGiving automatically collect any giftaid tax rebate that may be due on your donations; this can increase their value by up to 25%.

viewing your balance

It should be possible for you to see an up-to-date statement of the totals raised and paid over to you – we maintain an online bookkeeping spreadsheets which you can become a 'viewer' of. Contact Lokabandhu for details.

If you have a query, Lokabandhu (lokabandhu@fwbo.org, 07852 281750) should be able to help.