



AGM | ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING | 2012 | DENVER, CO MARCH 30-APRIL 1

How to Raise Funds – The Basics of Fundraising

All Activism work costs money. Whether you are raising funds to support your group's activities at the local level or to support the life-saving work of Amnesty International worldwide, fundraising is an absolutely essential component of your efforts. Fundraising can be fun and success is practically guaranteed if you ask!

Fundraising Is Human Rights Work

You may be raising the money to finance your group's activities at the local level but beyond that, you are raising money to support the work of Amnesty International USA and ultimately Amnesty International's vital, life-saving work worldwide! Each and every member of Amnesty International should be proud to be involved with one of the world's oldest human rights organizations.

Did You Know?

Amnesty International receives almost all of its funding from its members and supporters - that's you. Amnesty groups make a minimum annual contribution of \$50 to AIUSA - some give more - to help cover the cost of member training, resource materials and other support you receive throughout the year. That includes travel scholarships to Regional Conferences, the Annual General Meeting and Leadership training. In short, the money comes right back to you.

Sharing the Wealth

There are other worthy organizations out there doing life-saving work as well. Sometimes we form alliances or partnerships with them on issues of common concern. But remember, when you are raising funds under Amnesty International's name you are raising funds first to support the programs, work and other activities of Amnesty International. **Cash donations to other organizations are inappropriate**, except under extremely rare circumstances. Possible exceptions to this policy will be handled on a case-by-case basis and you should check with your Regional Office. But as a rule of thumb, all monies raised under Amnesty International's name remain with Amnesty International. If you are raising money jointly with another organization, of course, you can split the proceeds.

And Remember...You are raising money to support very important work. Your work!

The Basic Principles of Fundraising

- You don't get any money unless you ask for it.
- Keep it simple and keep it fun.
- The best approach is the direct, personal approach. When others can see how passionate you are for a cause, they are likely to become passionate about it too!
- You have to give people something for their money, even if it is only a sense of accomplishment in knowing their funds will support your good work - tell them about the importance of their contribution.
- Funds raised in the name of Amnesty International are to be used either in support of activist group activities or donated to AISUA.

Know Where You Are Going: Identify specifically what it is you want to accomplish. Set clear, reasonable financial goals and stick to them.

Have A Plan: Selling fair trade chocolate? Staging a Jamnesty concert? It all starts with a plan.

Draw on your Resources: And that means you, your fellow group members, your Area Coordinator or a Student Coordinator, your friends and allies. Contact your Regional Office (1-866-A-REGION) and other AI groups for ideas. You have a lot going for you in terms of experience, enthusiasm and energy.



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Keep It Positive: If you think you can't do it, you won't. Remember, you are selling something worthwhile!

Know Your Territory: Good fundraisers know their market.

Plan Your Budget Ahead of Time

Before developing a fundraising plan and goals, estimate the amount of money your group needs to carry out its work for the next year.

Basic categories include:

- **Annual Group Assessment Fee:** All AIUSA groups are asked to make a minimum annual contribution of \$50 to AIUSA – some give more – to help cover the cost of training, resource materials and other support you receive throughout the year.
- **Publicity:** Costs for flyers, posters, photocopying, brochures, and newsletters. Try to find a printer who will donate the printing of flyers, or at least give you a discount. Have an overall printing budget, which includes photocopying costs.
- **Postage:** Some groups expect individual members to absorb this cost, which is fine in the short run, but can become burdensome over time on those members who do most of the mail. Include costs for newsletter distribution.
- **Meeting Costs:** Consider costs for rooms for special meetings, refreshments, audio/visual equipment, advertising, etc. How many meetings will you have? What will happen at those meetings that might affect costs?
- **Action Costs:** Include transportation, "props" (signs, posters, bull horn, etc.), printed materials, and postage for mailing letters or postcards.
- **Travel:** Some travel may be required for the development of your group. For example some groups may cover the costs of travel for lobbying to Congress or in assistance to members attending Regional meetings and conferences.
- **Speakers:** Costs for speaker should usually not include travel, lodging, meals, and honoraria. Know your budget and stick to it – get ready to compromise.
- **Resources:** Many reports and videos are available from AI. Much information can be obtained for free from the AI website. For merchandise such as T-Shirts, Calendars, etc. check out the [Shop Amnesty](#) online store.
- **Fundraising-Related Expenses:** It costs money to make money. Costs include publicity, advertising, facility costs and everything needed to run an event (prizes, entertainment, food, etc.).
- **Volunteer and Donor Appreciation:** Groups may want to recognize donors and members (all or some who have worked particularly hard on an action or event) with thank-you notes, a token AI gift (bumper sticker, calendar, or T-shirt), or a gift certificate to a local restaurant or business. Keeping your members excited about the group is imperative to the future of the group!

Once your group has made a budget estimate for each category, add all costs together to determine the total you have to raise. If the amount is more than you can reasonably expect to raise, you will need to prioritize and decide which items are most important.

Fundraising Planning

After you decide what your group needs, you have to figure out how to get it. You can either raise money or have goods and services donated (known as in-kind donations).



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Assess your group, asking questions such as...

- What material resources do we already have?
- Who do people in our group know? Public officials, religious leaders, college faculty, entertainers and local merchants are examples of contacts who can donate time, materials or food for your event.
- What do we like to do? Are there group members with special talents? Are any group members artists, musicians, or experienced speakers?
- What other organizations do members belong to that may want to collaborate?

When creating a fundraising plan, keep in mind the following:

- Fun: Fundraising activities should be fun for the donors and for the members who have to put it together and sacrifice their time.
- Simplicity: Keep it simple. The more bells and whistles you add to the plan, the more things can go wrong.
- Potential Hazards: Beware of fundraising that requires large up-front investment, includes a high-risk of losing money, or could harm your group's retention if you fail to meet expectations. Explore options for reducing high-priced overhead items.
- Involvement: Involve members and others in a positive way, without drawing time and resources from other necessary work.
- Donor Appreciation: Make donors feel good about giving. Thank them and when appropriate, do so publicly.
- Celebration: Celebrate victories and achievements. Reward friends, allies, and hard-working group members when appropriate.

Fundraising Ideas and Suggestions

In-kind Donations

Look at each expense and think about ways you can get those needs met for free or at a discount. Examples of in-kind donations include food from a restaurant, printing from a printer, or a complimentary room at a hotel. Always remember to thank donors (with a letter) and with free publicity if they don't want to remain anonymous (e.g. an ad in your newsletter or a letter to the editor after an event).

Membership Dues

Membership dues should be a basic part of your fundraising plan. They are an easy, dependable source of income from your constituents - the people who most want you to keep doing what you're doing. You'll hear many arguments against group dues: "Volunteers give time, they shouldn't be asked for money;" "Our members already give to AIUSA so we shouldn't ask twice;" "Those who can't pay will feel left out." Time, however, is not money. Group members know you need both to do your work. As for leaving people out, you can design a system that won't offend any volunteers. Many people who appreciate your work cannot attend meetings; dues give them a chance to invest in the group. If your members absolutely reject the idea of dues, offer them opportunities to donate for specific projects or costs.

Hints for determining and collecting membership dues:



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Hints for determining and collecting Membership dues...

- When determining a membership fee, be sensitive to different economic levels among your members. Groups could have lower membership rates for the elderly, students, and people on fixed incomes, as well as a regular rate for other members.
- Invite people to join at each meeting and event. Wherever you display AI materials, make a membership coupon available. Put one in your newsletter.
- If you have a newsletter, start with a reminder: "Please renew your membership before Thanksgiving, to receive our special Human Rights Day newsletter."
- Determine what membership in your organization means. Are there going to be a particular rights, privileges, or benefits members get when they pay dues (such as voting rights)?

Offer members a concrete benefit as a thank-you. Include items such as:

- Newsletter: a newsletter is a great benefit that keeps members informed of your work and is also a good forum for further requests. Each issue should include a coupon for gift memberships or donations.
- AI bumper stickers, buttons, or note cards
- Member packets (a letter-writing guide, AI brochures)
- T-shirts
- Copies of AIUSA Annual Report

Special Appeals

Some groups separate the funds used for regular operations from special appeals needs. It is often easier to raise larger sums of money if you can tell donors exactly what the money is for. Large donors in particular like to be able to see their money at work. If your group has an action or specific campaign coming up, use it as an opportunity to make a special appeal to your regular donors and others.

Selling Merchandise

Selling T-shirts, pins, and posters requires initial funds to purchase the products. Your group can order merchandise through Shop Amnesty or you can design your own products.

What to Sell

Start with low-priced items. For groups just starting out with merchandizing as a fundraiser, start with small-ticket items like pins and stickers instead of t-shirts. For such small items, request donations and then give items away. For example, you might be able to sell buttons for 50 cents, but if you request a donation for that same pin, many people are likely to put a dollar or some larger amount into your collection jar.

AI Merchandise

The Shop Amnesty online store includes T-shirts, bags, hats, and other items. Refer to the catalogue for bulk rates. If ordering T-shirts, note that you must order more than 30 items to get the bulk rate, but you can mix and match the designs. Full payment, including shipping and handling, must be sent with the order. Anticipate two weeks for delivery.

Fair Trade Fundraiser

Equal Exchange, pioneers in the Fair Trade movement/the oldest Fair Trade company in the U.S., and Amnesty International USA are teaming up to provide an easy way to raise funds for your AIUSA group, and help farmers and their families around the world! Groups earn 45% profits selling organic and Fair Trade coffees, teas and chocolates. Your order will come with educational and outreach tools to raise awareness about Fair Trade on your campus or in your community. *Order directly from Equal Exchange by calling (774) 776-7371 and mention Amnesty International USA. If you have any questions please call Equal Exchange or go to: www.equalexchange.com/fundraiser.*



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Local Vendor Merchandise

Your group can also design and sell its own products produced by a local vendor. Be sure to discuss design elements, which will affect the price of the merchandise (e.g. number of colors used, number of sides of a T-shirt on which there is printing, etc). Be creative with your design, but make sure that it communicates a human rights message and includes AI's logo. When making an order be sure to have a written agreement with the vendor as well as dates for payment and delivery.

Special Holiday Merchandise

Many small items – such as flowers, cookies, and cards – can be sold for Holidays such as Halloween, Mother's Day, Valentine's Day, and religious holidays.

What to Charge

A general rule of thumb is to charge double what you pay. When deciding your price, be sure to look at "full cost accounting"; in other words, consider any costs associated with selling the shirts (e.g. cost of booth and table space, as well as number of shirts you give away to volunteers, guest speakers, or others). If people complain to you about the price being too high, don't lower it. Always politely explain that the sales are for a good cause. Don't set your price too low. For instance, if shirts cost you \$7 and you sell them for \$10, it will take you 34 shirts to make a profit of \$100. If you sell them for \$15, it will only take you 13 shirts to make a profit of \$100.

How to Handle "Start-up" Costs

By ordering in bulk, your group can save money on the cost per item, but it is difficult to come up with the money for this up front. To determine the size of your order, assess the number of potential buyers and the amount of funds available. To get the money, if your group does not already have it, allow members to pre-order items such as T-shirts and have them pay in advance. Consider all possible sources for funding. A group member might front the money or student groups may be able to receive funds from their student association. Wherever the money comes from, if it is borrowed, be sure that all the money you collect goes immediately to paying those people and organizations back!

How to Set-up

Attractive displays always help to sell merchandise. If people can see the items you are selling, they are more likely to buy them. You can sometimes use clothesline and clothespins or make some sort of simple rack for T-shirts and other items. If you pin or tape shirts to a back wall, make sure you don't damage the wall.

STUDENT GROUPS: SPECIAL NOTE ON BANK ACCOUNTS

Except at a very small number of private schools, groups affiliated with schools are always tax-exempt.

If your school requires your group to keep funds in a pool managed by school administrators, keep careful records of income and expenses. If you encounter problems, contact your Regional Office for advice. All groups should ask more than one person to review the bookkeeping ledger. Bookkeeping is tough and two heads are better than one. If someone finds accounting errors they are unable to resolve or evidence of fraud or disappearing funds, contact your Regional Office immediately.

AIUSA MAILING LISTS

AI groups can request mailing labels for members in their geographic area for the purpose of recruiting and/or sending out information about group events. Please do not use this mailing list to solicit contributions directly! Direct-mail donors with a gift in the last 18 months are selected for these mailings. To ensure the accuracy and integrity of data, the New York office will provide pressure-sensitive labels for one-time use only. Groups should contact the New York office for a set of labels for each new event. Please be sure to inform your Regional office about the mailing before contacting New York for labels.