

How to engage local communities and MPs: a conversation with Tearfund

Q: Tell us a bit about your last UK Aid Match appeal

A: The theme for our round of funding applications was ocean plastics. We saw this as an opportunity to increase the awareness of our environmental sustainability work in Pakistan which generates 20 million tonnes of rubbish, including plastic, every year.

Between February and May 2019, we ran an appeal using a multi-channel approach utilising radio, TV, direct marketing, press inserts, social media, church promotion and point of sale in 2,800 Co-op food stores.

We also asked our supporters to think about their own plastic usage and to consider taking a pledge to give up an item of single use plastic for 40 days. This led to significant press coverage and engagement from Members of Parliament (MPs) including the Prime Minister at the time, Theresa May, who mentioned the appeal during Prime Minister's Questions.

Generally, your writing should be justified rather than left or right aligned. However, when typing to the side of a picture or a chart, left align your text.

Q: Can you tell us about how you engaged local communities? How important is this approach to your fundraising and awareness raising?

A: As a Christian organisation, our relationships with hundreds of churches across the country are fundamental to any fundraising appeal that we run. We sent all the churches on our database a letter asking them to consider promoting the appeal in church services. This included a link to a webpage with bespoke downloadable resources including posters, a video and a PowerPoint presentation.

Q: Which activities attracted most of your new donors?

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Q: During your appeal over 39 MPs committed to your Plastic Pledge and Theresa May mentioned the appeal during Prime Minister's Questions on 6 March. Can you tell us how you achieved this, and what was your approach?

A: The key to our approach for this work was to identify parliamentary champions who would encourage party colleagues to engage and help to share our message as trusted messengers. Once we had secured a critical mass of engaged MPs, it became easier to attract additional MPs to join in our action and support the appeal. We intentionally created an MP action that was fun, engaging and challenging for MPs and would allow them to do proactive local media.

Q: How did engaging MPs impact your fundraising?

A: By engaging MPs, we were able to spread the UK Aid Match messaging across the country, reaching new and interesting audiences that we would otherwise not have had direct access to.

Q: What did you learn during your UKAM appeal that you will be using in the future, especially on engaging local communities and MPs?

A: Having a dual ask was crucial to the success of this appeal, and we would strongly consider doing so again in the future. The lifestyle ask (also known as the Plastic Pledge) enabled us to gain extensive media coverage due to it being such a topical issue. It enabled us to connect with supporters at a personal level, as well as promote the appeal through channels where a fundraising ask was inappropriate e.g. when speaking with MPs.

In regards to MP engagement, we learnt that early identification of champions is very important. They can significantly expand your access and simultaneously vouch for you as an organisation. This provides greater credibility with MPs that you may be engaging with for the first time. The creation of a social media pack which allowed MPs to engage digitally with the appeal in a consistent manner allowed for greater dissemination of messaging.

Q: What advice would you give to another organisation trying to engage local communities and MPs?

A: Early engagement and identifying the right audience is essential. It is important to ensure that the bar to initial entry isn't too high. You should always think about what the mutual benefit for both your organisation and the MP is.

Q: How did running a UK Aid Match appeal affect your organisation?

A: When you are successful in your application for a UK Aid Match appeal, it's important to remember that it will naturally require an element of reprioritisation for all involved as application approval is not guaranteed and so inevitably alternative fundraising plans will have been made.

The impact at Tearfund was significant as our 2019 UK Aid Match appeal spanned over 24 teams uniting Fundraising, Government Relations, Media and Advocacy. We learnt invaluable

lessons about how to run a successful fully integrated campaign that have gone on to shape new ways of working together.