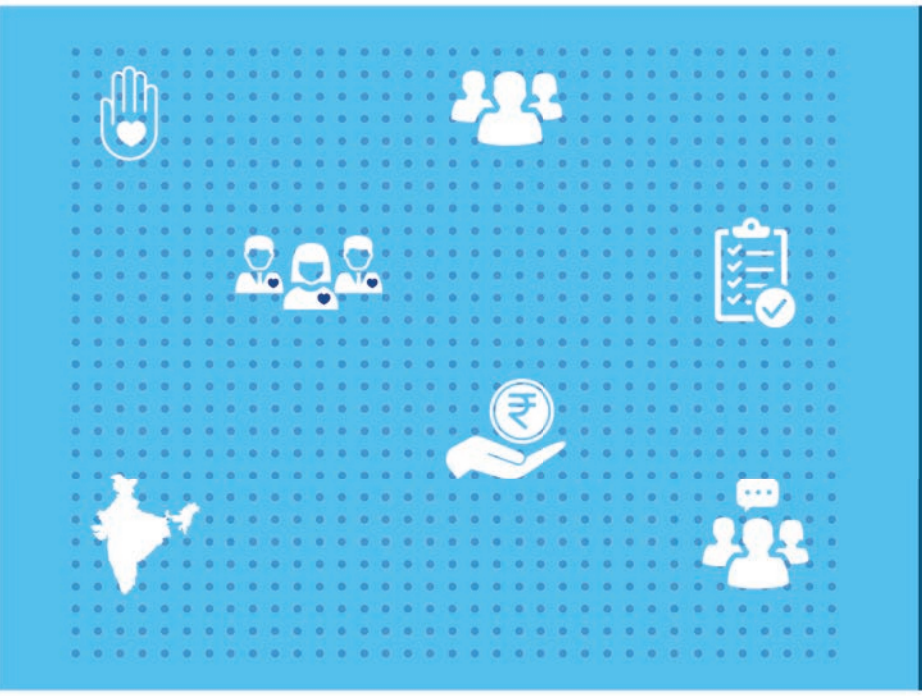


INDIAN NGO FUNDRAISING "BRIGHT SPOTS" REPORT (Updated)

JAN 2022

Lifting Up What Works in Raising Money from Individuals in India



By Morry Rao Hermón,
Director of Philanthropy, UC Berkeley
In collaboration with Samhita

Berkeley UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA | Samhita A BETTER NORMAL

Update

An Addendum to this Report since the COVID-19 Pandemic Began

Much has changed since I published this 'bright spots' report two years ago. The COVID-19 pandemic has hit India hard, impacting the country's vast nonprofit sector in profound ways. Of particular note is the ways that the pandemic has altered the fundraising landscape.

In the past two years I have reconnected with the three bright spot organizations profiled in this report, asking these frontline fundraisers about their resource mobilization efforts during lockdown. Their responses were both expected and surprising.

1) *CSR resources have become less reliable, shifting almost exclusively to pandemic relief, restoration work and basic needs and away from a variety of important causes.*

While there is no question that the pandemic has exacerbated the situation among the 800 million people living in poverty in India, many of whom were unable to make money (unlike India's middle class who could shift to remote work during lockdown), in the last two years nonprofits received less funding for their core operating expenses and other types of programming such as education, women's empowerment, skills training, the environment, etc.

Now more than ever, India's social sector organizations need to diversify their funding sources to reduce over-reliance on companies and build a base of individual donors (both retail givers and HNIs), foundation support, international aid, government grants, etc.

For Teach for India (TFI), funds were diverted to support COVID relief, as were their core programs, which needed to be repurposed to respond to the pandemic and the needs of their communities. Says lead fundraiser Sara Khan, "the learning losses were staggering. A large number of our CSR donors, thus, continued to fund our operations."

2) *Online giving, crowdfunding, and the use of mobile donations and digital wallets (e.g. GooglePay, ApplePay, RazorPay, PayPal, etc.) has skyrocketed during the pandemic.*

Last year was the biggest year for GlobalGiving in terms of volume. According to Kavita Mathew, they raised over $100 million total, mostly for disaster relief and from outside of the country (unfortunately, crowdfunding platforms that rely on support from the Indian diaspora have been constrained by government restrictions on foreign givers and foundations). GiveIndia's platform has reached new records in the number of online gifts received for charity from within the country, making it possible to become a grantmaking organization. Today, India's large middle class is far more comfortable making financial donations from their mobile phone than they were before the pandemic (which is a good thing).

During the lockdown Light of Life Trust raised over 60 Lakhs for their COVID relief work. Says chief development officer Sheela Iyer, online donors purchased grocery kits and educational supplies for the 6,000 beneficiaries and their families—and all done from home without stepping outside using their website and pushing it out through crowdfunding campaigns. LOLT also created a Youtube Channel to broadcast their impact to the world. In the last two years they acquired many new retail givers. According to Resource Mobilisation Manager Harpal Singh, email solicitations have worked well this time. During the first round nobody responded but by fourth time 1 out of 4 responded (25% response rate is pretty good!)

TFI witnessed a growth in their online contributions as well. According to Sara Khan, they were able to raise money for the needs of their communities and devices for their kids through their website and platforms like Global Giving and GiveIndia. Unfortunately, it has been much harder to raise money online for their core work of leadership development and training teachers.

The million dollar question will be whether the explosive growth in retail giving via the Internet and cell phone apps will continue in a COVID-endemic world—and lead to bigger gifts.

3) *Conversely, as retail giving has soared, with many more online gifts made at small amounts, major giving fundraising has been on the decline.*

Face-to-face interactions, which we lifted up in the benchmarking survey and case studies as the most effective way to ask people for money, has simply not been possible. Some nonprofits tried to create online fundraising events but the virtual format was not effective; instead many had to cancel their annual galas, marathons, etc. during the pandemic. Engaging donors in the mission of the organization is much harder to do in an era of lockdowns and social distancing. NGOs have been unable to bring their major givers and prospects to tour the programs or organize opportunities for them to volunteer with the beneficiaries.

As we get past the worst of the omicron variant's impact in India this month (January), NGOs are now starting to meet with their donors again face-to-face. For LoLT, they are inviting donors to come for one-on-one meetings, and recently had a very successful virtual marathon. Using the theme, "I run, they learn", teams and individuals raised record amounts of money for the organization, while doing something positive for their health (after months of being cooped up indoors!). They are planning on doing another event in October (a stand-up comedy show) in-person. They have already booked the hall and are setting the date.

Volunteering is starting to rebound as well. In the past year LOLT has received over 80 requests to volunteer with the organization, primarily from university students interested in serving as academic tutors with to help the kids.

4) *Philanthropy is getting more organized and competitive, which could be a good thing for small organizations in more rural areas.*

Another trend that has emerged in the past two years is the growth of the donor advisor (something that has been used in the US for decades). The pandemic has made many Indians rich, with over 60 "unicorn" startups just in the last year. With new wealth comes the desire to give back to society and make your mark in a deliberate and unique way.

As a result, Indian philanthropy is getting more organized. According to SNEHA CEO Vanessa D'souza, in addition to online portals such as GiveIndia, a number of new intermediary organizations have emerged like Sattva, United Way, Seva and Dasra to provide advisory services to HNIs who wish to make a greater philanthropic impact. These intermediaries are not only setting up individual HNI philanthropy strategies, many corporates are going to them for advisory services as well, sparked by new CSR rules that require external evaluation of the NGOs.

The good news is that small nonprofits in rural areas stand a very good chance of accessing philanthropy from Corporates and HNIs now thanks to these new intermediaries. According to Vanessa, staff from the intermediaries are going into villages and looking for smaller organizations to support. "It used to be the challenge was to ID them, vet them, monitor them, but now have someone to do it for them, which hopefully will create more equity between smaller and larger NGOs," she says.

5) *Technology has enabled NGOs to stay connected with major donors during the pandemic*

The bright spot organizations interviewed for this report have continued to keep in touch with their big donors regularly via SMS messaging, phone conversations, and Zoom or WhatsApp video calls, as well as sending personalized emails. Sheela Iyer at LoLT sent monthly updates and quarterly impact reports based on the donor's area of interest. The savviest fundraisers have invested time in their relationships, and in turn, their donors have not let them down. Loyal givers have rallied around them in their hour of need.

With these changes in mind, we add a new guiding principle to our top ten list."***#11: Leverage technology to acquire new givers, keep in touch with donors, and build your base of support.***"

The resilience of our 'bright spot' organizations point the way for how we can sustain some of these retail fundraising gains in a post-pandemic (or more likely a COVID-19 endemic) world. Says Vanessa, "The principles of fundraising remain the same - stay close to your donors, look for new opportunities and keep doing good quality work".

Wishing you the best in your fundraising journeys, and again, please don't hesitate to reach out if you have questions or would like additional support.

Sincerely,

Morry Rao Hermón

Berkeley, California, January 25, 2022

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1. Introduction

A message from the study's author...

Individual donors represent the fastest growing market and source of income for NGOs today and yet remain under-explored in India. There are a number of nonprofit organizations that are doing a great job of engaging India's burgeoning middle class and building a base of life-long donors. Unfortunately these inspiring stories are seldom told. This paper lifts up these homegrown examples of best practices and effective strategies in the individual fundraising arena.

Over the past five years I have been working with Ashoka India and Samhita GoodCSR to strengthen the fund development capacity of Indian nonprofits. While conducting a series of skills-building workshops in Bangalore, Mumbai, and New Delhi on the topic of fundraising from individuals, I discovered that there was a gap in the knowledge base about giving trends and fundraising techniques in India. Although my resource mobilization training workshops were well received by hundreds of frontline fundraisers, as one participant wrote, they could have been better if they brought "an Indian perspective." In 2018 I set out to do just that.

Given the lack of primary data, I began developing my own 'benchmarking' study of individual donor fundraising in India that nonprofits could use to assess their performance. I started my research with a survey of the Samhita GoodCSR network of close to 3,000 organizations—a representative sample of India's vast social sector. The comprehensive survey addressed both everyday giving (AKA "retail" fundraising) as well as major donor campaigns focused on High Net-worth Individuals (HNI). The findings from that 40-question assessment tool on funding, fundraising and donor engagement were shared in my first paper: "Indian Giving Benchmarking Report: Results of Indian NGO Survey on Fundraising from Individuals," December 2019 (https://www.samhita.org/indian-giving-benchmarking-report/)

This report is part two of my research. Using the data from the benchmarking survey, I worked with the staff at Samhita to identify a number of organizations that were having unparalleled success raising money from India's burgeoning middle class—what we are calling fundraising 'bright spots.' I then interviewed these ten exemplars, and narrowed the group down to a few NGOs to profile, including SNEHA, Light of Life Trust, and Teach for India. Through a series of in-depth 'system' interviews with their staff and volunteers, I unpacked the reasons behind their success, drawing out the guiding principles common to all the 'bright spot' organizations. This report answers the question, *"What does a 'culture of philanthropy' look like in the NGO space in India?"* And how might you go about developing one for your organization?

It is my hope that other NGOs can learn from their example and adopt these principles so that they can diversify their revenues, grow their programs, and sustain their operations over time.

Sincerely,

Morry Rao Hermón

Berkeley, California, January 25, 2020

2. Acknowledgements

This report was made possible thanks to colleagues who share my commitment to building nonprofit capacity. First I would like to acknowledge Steve Lew at CompassPoint Nonprofit Services, and fundraising consultant Kim Roth Klein & Roth Consulting, for their guidance on this project, which was inspired by their research on best practices among grassroots NGOs in the US. In their groundbreaking report entitled "Fundraising Bright Spots: Strategies and Inspiration from Social Change Organizations Raising Money from Individual Donors," they lift up examples of American organizations that are enjoying unusual effectiveness in raising money from individuals, drawing out the guiding principles behind their success (CompassPoint, 2016 - https://www.haasjr.org/sites/default/files/resources/Haas_BrightSpots_F2_0.pdf).

Their 'bright spot' research is based on the social science concept of "Positive Deviance"– unusual success in the face of widespread challenges. As a fund development professional with over two decades of experience raising money from individuals, foundations, and corporations, I can attest to the fact that asking for money is not always easy. Fundraising "bright spots" inspire us to beat the odds and generate the resources needed to improve lives and change the world.

I am grateful to the 22 staff members and volunteers from the ten organizations that participated in this Indian NGO Fundraising Bright Spots analysis who not only took the time out of their busy schedules to be interviewed for this report, but also shared the secrets of their success so that the entire social sector ecosystem could benefit from their example (see Appendix A for list of interviewees). Special thanks to Light of Life Trust fundraiser extraordinaire Sheela Iyer, SNEHA CEO Vanessa D'souza, and TFI Development Director Sara Khan for showing us the way.

My colleague Kavita Matthews of GlobalGiving India was very helpful in recommending a number of small- to medium-sized nonprofits that exemplify 'positive deviance' in running successful crowdfunding campaigns in India, primarily serving low-income children.

I would also like to acknowledge Priya Naik, founder & CEO of Samhita Social Ventures, a social enterprise that connects corporate philanthropy to great nonprofits in India. Priya has built an effective NGO network and platform (Samhita GoodCSR-https://www.goodcsr.in/) for building resource development skills and capacity. Her staff have been indispensable in organizing my fundraising training workshops and connecting with the nonprofit participants of this research project. Finally, I would like to thank Ayushi Khare, Knowledge Associate at the Collective Good Foundation, for transcribing all the interview recordings and organizing them in such a helpful way for this report (http://www.collectivegood.in/).

*"**Positive deviance (PD)** is an approach to behavioral and social change based on the observation that in any community, there are people whose uncommon but successful behaviors or strategies enable them to find better solutions to a problem than their peers, despite facing similar challenges and having no extra resources or knowledge than their peers."*

-- Wikipedia

3. Methodology

Background. Many Indian nonprofits are doing a great job of individual fundraising. We set out to identify these "bright spots" and use them to study the trends and best practices in the individual fundraising arena. This research project began with a survey of Samhita GoodCSR's network of 2,800 NGOs. The online questionnaire on fundraising from individuals was administered over the summer of 2018. Close to 700 nonprofits responded to the 40-question survey, representing the full range of causes (livelihoods, the environment, healthcare, etc.), constituencies (children, youth, women, elderly), and regions, both urban and rural.

Nominee Selection Criteria. The results of the survey on donor giving in India were used to identify organizations that were generating a significant portion of their revenues from a pool of individual donors. These exemplary organizations also had well-developed donor identification, qualification, cultivation, solicitation and stewardship strategies. In addition, the top ten fundraising "Bright Spots" were selected because they represented homegrown examples (i.e., not International NGOs based in other countries like the U.S. or the U.K.) that exhibited a uniquely Indian approach to raising money from individual givers, both HNIs and retail fundraising.

Bright Spot Review Process. After reviewing the 'bright spot' organization's individual fundraising performance for the past two years, the researchers conducted initial interviews with each of the organization's CEO or Chief Development Officer. With the baseline survey data and preliminary interviews, they then narrowed down the list from 10 to 3 fundraising 'bright spots' to profile in this report (SNEHA, TFI, and Light of Life Trust). These NGOs have a robust base of individual givers relative to their peers, and employ multi-pronged strategies for engaging their donors. All three are large organizations based in Mumbai, with charismatic women founders.

The Case Studies. Each interview took an hour, and was conducted by Morry Rao Hermón from UC Berkeley and transcribed by Ayushi Khare from the Collective Good Foundation (a Samhita GoodCSR Initiative). A total of 22 interviews were completed via Zoom, a widely-used video-conferencing platform. To create the three case studies, the study author undertook "system" interviews with 4-5 key informants within each 'bright spot' organization–the CEO, fundraising staff, the founder, program staff, and donors. These conversations with multiple stakeholders provided a detailed understanding of their NGO's fundraising systems, methods, and activities.



Guiding Principles. This in-depth exploration of the 'bright spot' fundraising programs enabled the study author to glean the essential ingredients of their success. Although each of the organizations in this study are unique in their approach, there are a number of common threads running through their efforts to build a base of lifelong donors. By analyzing the 14 stakeholder interviews at SNEHA, Light of Life Trust and TFI, the author was able to draw out the **Top Ten Guiding Principles** shared by the fundraising 'bright spot' organizations. These best practices provide a roadmap that other Indian nonprofits can use to learn from the example set by their peers, and adopt these principles in their own organizations, regardless of their size or cause.

The Top Ten Guiding Principles can be boiled down even further into **five core competencies** that Indian NGOs should keep in mind when working to build their individual donor base:

1. Be unapologetic about asking for money
2. Focus on your outcomes and the money will follow
3. Find ways to engage your donors in the mission
4. Invest in professional fundraising staff
5. Foster a *"Culture of Philanthropy"* within your organization



Photo by Morry Rao Hermón

4. Fundraising 'Bright Spot' NGOs At A Glance

Name	City	Cause(s)	Tagline
Annamrita Foundation	Mumbai City (Maharashtra)	Hunger Alleviation	"Providing a mid-day meal to over 10,00,000 children every day."
Apnalaya	Mumbai City (Maharashtra)	Education, Livelihoods, Civic Engagement	"Empowering the Urban Poor.'
Bhumi	Chennai (Tamil Nadu)	Education	"Fostering an environment where young adults & children learn, lead and thrive."
Goonj	New Delhi	Disaster Relief, Livelihoods, Environment	"A voice, an effort."
Light of Life Trust*	Mumbai City (Maharashtra)	Health, Livelihoods, Skills Development	"Transforming rural underprivileged communities in India."
Magic Bus India	Mumbai City (Maharashtra)	Education, Livelihoods, Skills Development	"Childhood to Livelihood."
Make A Difference (MAD)	Cochin (Kerala)	Child Welfare, Education, Youth Empowerment	"It's never too late to make a difference."
SNEHA (Society for Nutrition, Education and Health Action)*	Mumbai City (Maharashtra)	Maternal & Newborn Health, Gender Equity	"A healthy world begins with a healthy woman."
Teach for India (TFI)*	Mumbai City (Maharashtra)	Education, Capacity-building	"Building a movement of leaders to eliminate educational inequity."

*** Fundraising "Bright Spots" profiled in this report**

5. Fundraising "Bright Spots" Guiding Principles

What are the most effective practices in fundraising from individuals?

Asking for money is not easy, but it is central to the very existence of nonprofit organizations. Bright spot organizations find creative ways to overcome fundraising challenges and illustrate how to go about building a robust base of lifelong givers.

Here is a **Top Ten** List of guiding principles that Indian nonprofits can try to put into practice and customize in their own individual donor development efforts:

1. *Be passionate about your cause*
2. *Be unapologetic about asking for money*
3. *Focus on your outcomes and the money will follow*
4. *Tell powerful stories*
5. *Start from who you know and work outwards*
6. *Invest time in your relationships with donors and you will see the ROI*
7. *Find ways to engage your donors in the mission of your organization*
8. *Create memorable experiences for your donors/prospects*
9. *Invest in professional fundraising staff*
10. *Foster a "Culture of Philanthropy" within your nonprofit ("Everyone a Fundraiser")*

1) Be Passionate About Your Cause

All nonprofits start with an idea, and usually, a social entrepreneur with a vision for how they want to change the world. They believe deeply in the work that they are doing on behalf of the environment, women, children, girls, animals, the elderly, the disabled—and this passion is infectious. Donors are naturally drawn to these inspiring leaders, fundraisers and program staff who are committed to the cause.

All three of the bright spot organizations profiled in this report were founded by charismatic women who think outside the box. They set out to not only serve vulnerable populations directly (which itself is laudable as a charitable cause), but to transform the educational and healthcare delivery systems that lead to poverty and poor health outcomes. This deep commitment unleashes philanthropy (which is different than charity, as philanthropic giving is often focused on solving the underlying problems in society and investing in impact). Passion for the cause also empowers social entrepreneurs to achieve the next guiding principle—not being shy when approaching friends, professional contacts, even strangers, for support.

2) Be Unapologetic About Asking for Money

Fundraising is challenging work. It requires you to step outside of your comfort zone and talk openly about a sensitive topic—money. While many organizations take the easy way out and "dial it in", often choosing more convenient but less effective methods for soliciting their donors such as email appeals or crowdfunding platforms, the most effective organizations embrace the challenge and actually ask people for money. They ask their friends, they ask their coworkers, they ask their family. Remember that you are not asking it for yourself—but for your nonprofit and its beneficiaries—for a cause that you believe in. Rather than apologizing, think of it as you doing the prospective donor a favor. As a fundraiser, you are making it possible for them to experience the joy of giving, enabling them to be part of something meaningful; something bigger than themselves.

Profile of an unabashed fundraiser

Sheela Iyer, head of Marketing & Communications at Light of Life Trust, embodies all the qualities of a successful frontline fundraiser. She is passionate about her cause, knows how to appeal to the head and the heart, and is direct in her resource mobilization efforts. In fact, when Sheela meets someone new she uses it as an opportunity to tell them all about her organization. Says Sheela, *"I ask people for money—shamelessly! It never stops. You go to a party, you go to wedding, you go to a company—it's all the same."*

Being unapologetic when asking for money has an important corollary – whenever possible do it **face-to-face** (or at least over the phone, via WhatsApp, etc.). Conversely, impersonal fundraising methods such as email blasts or online crowdfunding campaigns are not as effective at soliciting individuals. In fact, it might be counterproductive; you might be missing a golden opportunity to secure a large gift if only you had spoken to the prospect directly and asked them for support.

This best practice among the bright spots was borne out in the benchmarking survey of Samhita GoodCSR network as well. 68% of nonprofits who have tried **making the ask in-person** said it was the most effective way to solicit a donor for a gift. Yet almost one in three NGOs (27%) have never tried asking individuals for a donation face-to-face. From my experience conducting training workshops in India, this is one area where fundraisers would like additional help. They appreciated the opportunity to practice asking for money—especially the role play exercises where they simulated calling prospective donors to get the meeting, asking them for advice, responding to objections, and pitching giving opportunities that match the donor's interests. The more experience you have doing this work, the more effective you will become.

"We didn't realize that the crowd funding platforms are driven by your inner or outer connects, and was expecting from the platform to drive crowd to your cause area, which doesn't really work."

--Ramesh Daswani CEO, Light of Life Trust

3) Focus on Your Outcomes and the Money will Follow

Donors are naturally attracted to good programs. I often counsel my nonprofit consulting clients that the first place to start on your fundraising journey is to make sure that you have a great program model worthy of sharing with others. If your organization can **show a measurable impact** on the problem that you are trying to solve, then the money will follow. This is the lesson that I learned when I first ran a nonprofit at age 30. Fresh out of graduate school, I was able to turn a failing vocational training center around by focusing on improving our programmatic performance. Once we achieved high job placement and retention rates for our low-income clients we attracted significant philanthropy—enough to create the first budget surplus in the center's history, and expand our revenue streams from a variety of public and private sources.

As you will see in the case studies, bright spots are successful in their resource mobilization efforts because of the impact they make in the world. Light Of Life Trust breaks the cycle of intergenerational poverty in the slums of Mumbai. Their theory of change is proven, as demonstrated by their impressive performance data (e.g. 98% of the children they serve pass their first qualifying exam at the 10th standard, and 85% go on to pursue a higher education) and well documented in their impact reports. SNEHA takes a comprehensive approach that begins with adolescent health to child health, and integrates domestic violence. They have invested in a rigorous monitoring and evaluation program that continuously assesses their performance, provides transparency and builds trust among their donors. The leadership of the bright spots instill confidence that the funds donated by individuals and institutions will be properly stewarded for maximum results.

4) Tell Powerful Stories

Great fundraisers appeal to both the head and to the heart. The head is about impact – being able to see measurable results through things like performance metrics. The heart is about telling stories of lives transformed. They appeal to emotion and pull on the heart strings. In her seminal book, *"Raising More Money: A Step-by-Step Guide to Building Lifelong Donors"* American fundraising guru Terry Axelrod wrote that *"the easiest way to provide an emotional hook for your organization is through stories. People will remember a story. Long after the specific facts have slipped from their minds, that story will linger."*

LOLT brings their performance metrics to life through their 'stories of impact.' They have collected thousands of **beneficiary stories** to share with their donors. Frontline fundraiser Sheela Iyer finds them very effective in convincing prospective givers to sponsor a child's education. She offers this bit of advice for other nonprofits with regards to fundraising from individuals:

"Work on the impact stories because that really sells your work, because that's what you are out there for. If your work is creating an impact, then you must shout it loudest!"

5) In attracting new givers, start from who you know and work outwards

Where do we begin when we want to recruit individual donors to our nonprofits? According to our survey, most NGOs (72%) find new donors through their founder's network. This is cited as the most effective method for acquiring new donors, as well as friends and colleagues of board members.

In *"Achieving Excellence in Fundraising"*, the legendary pioneer of professional fund development Hank Russo developed a Constituency Model for the field. Rosso posited that every organization has a constituency. At the center of the circle are the nonprofit's core stakeholders—those who have the strongest bonds and hold everything together. These primary constituents include the senior management, board of directors, and major donors—who often serve as the best brand ambassadors to ask their contacts for money. The next circle includes your volunteers, employees, beneficiaries and general donors. As you move outwards from the center, the strength of the connection to the mission becomes weaker. Your goal is to deepen the connection and bring the outward constituencies into the core.

Fundraising 'bright spots' use a variety of strategies to identify and acquire new givers. LOLT organizes fun events like art exhibits, theatrical performances, and marathons, while SNEHA runs a popular gala for HNIs, as well as smaller donor dinners. These creative events are great ways to not only fundraise, but to *friend*-raise, and grow your circle of friends.

6) Invest time in your relationships with donors and you will see the ROI

People are often surprised to hear that I enjoy fundraising, and actually like asking people for money. I feel blessed to be part of a profession that unleashes generosity for worthy causes. As a social being, perhaps what I enjoy the most about my job is getting to know my donors. Fundraising is all about relationships, and individual fundraising is all about getting to know your donors as *individuals*. It's about understanding their unique reasons for giving. What inspires them? What do they care about? What do they think about your programs? What information would they like to receive from you? How do they want to be involved in the mission of your organization? It is essential to keep in touch with your donors throughout the year, so that when the time comes to ask them for money again, it's not the first time they have heard from you in a while, but rather, a natural continuation of an ongoing, long-term relationship.

Staff from our bright spot organizations spend a significant amount of their time **cultivating and stewarding relationships** with their major donors throughout the year. It doesn't end after the constituent has made his or her gift or attended the event. That's just the beginning. CEOs and Development Directors are constantly reaching out via email, phone, SMS and in-person (or virtual) visits. During these regular touch points, our savvy relationship-builders check in with their funding partners, ask how they are doing, and give them an update about the programs. They answer questions the investor has about the impact of their gift. Like any healthy relationship, the key to success is maintaining open and ongoing lines of communication.

> *"Fundraising is the gentle art of teaching others the joy of giving."*
> **-- Hank Russo, 1918-1999**

7) Find ways to engage your donors in the mission of your organization

Giving money is just one of the ways that people want to do good in the world. Just as important is giving of one's time. When developing a relationship with your donor, don't just treat them as pocketbooks. Instead, think about offering them a wide range of ways to connect to your mission. This includes volunteering with your beneficiaries or providing helpful expertise to your leadership (e.g., serving on event committees or your board of trustees). Your goal is to deepen your constituent's connection to the organization over time. And the more customized the better.

According to our survey, the majority (54%) of Indian NGOs have some kind of **volunteer program** to engage their donors and prospects in the mission of their organization. Investing significant time and energy in developing and implementing a volunteer program can result in funding for your organization. Volunteer management and employee engagement efforts are a lot of work, but in the end the investment usually pays off. Volunteers can be converted into donors, and first-time donors can also volunteer as a next step along the engagement continuum.

Not everyone wants to volunteer, but for those who do, it can create lasting bonds to the nonprofit that can translate into greater philanthropy. Interacting directly with your clients, staff and programs is a great way to understand the true impact of your work. According to our survey, for those NGOs with volunteer programs, the majority (51%) get donors to help organize events. In one of SNEHA's annual gala dinners, a group of HNIs who were good singers and dancers were invited to perform on stage for the audience, which turned out to be an extremely successful way of engaging the donors. Other common donor engagement methods include providing advice to NGO leadership, volunteering directly with the beneficiaries (e.g. teaching kids, helping with job search, mentoring program), and serving on a governing board or a committee.



Learning from one another at a fundraising training workshop in Bangalore, 2015

Bright spot organizations focus on **developing their boards** into a cadre of strategic advisors, bringing valuable expertise to the leadership on a variety of essential management subjects from law to finance, and from HR to technology. These top tier volunteers are at the center of the constituent engagement circle, and are expected to leverage their personal and professional contacts, often opening doors for the CEO and Development Director to corporate and individual philanthropy. As brand ambassadors, they give, and they get, on behalf of the NGO. As the old saying goes, *'Ask for money and you get advice. Ask for advice, and oftentimes you get money.'*

SNEHA trustee and donor Nitin Nayar brings up an important caveat about volunteer programs for corporate employees—the danger of making things for the volunteers to do that doesn't actually serve the needs of the beneficiaries or the nonprofit. That's why it is essential that your NGO create an authentic volunteer program, i.e., one that is genuinely helpful to your clients, staff and programs while giving your volunteers something useful and meaningful for them to do. Although not profiled in this report, according to Nitin, Magic Bus India has figured out a way to do this very well. Their corporate engagement programs take beneficiaries and volunteers out to a field to play sports, using the games to teach values like teamwork and leadership.

Another fundraising bright spot organization interviewed for this research project, *Make A Difference (MAD)*, offers an example of how Indian NGOs are leveraging their volunteer programs to build a base of lifelong donors. According to Kavita Mathew of GlobalGiving India, thanks to MAD's unique model of recruiting young volunteers to engage directly with their clients (children and youth living in orphanages and shelters throughout India), they benefit tremendously from having an army of ready, willing and able crowdfunders who help connect the organization to their social networks through popular online donation platforms like GiveIndia and GlobalGiving.

8) Create Memorable Experiences for your Donors

In addition to the authentic and meaningful volunteer opportunities described above, fundraising bright spot organizations are really good at creating memorable, curated experiences for their individual givers and prospects.

Unlike in the U.S., **fundraising events** such as benefit concerts, gala dinners and house parties are not common in India, except among the largest NGOs. As we found in our survey, the majority (54%) of nonprofits have never tried it. Yet SNEHA does this regularly and finds it quite effective for recruiting new donors and bringing in unrestricted funds. They organize two point-of-entry events for HNIs—their annual gala fundraising dinner and small donor dinner friend-raisers (AKA "house parties") at the homes of a trustee or other major donor to the NGO.

> *"Once the donors take the field visit they are totally sold. The real heroes are the program staff in the field. They are so impressed by what they are doing and how dedicated the ground team is that the donors are eager to support the work".*
>
> **--Sheela Iyer, Light of Life Trust**

Perhaps the best way to dispel any doubts that charitable funds will be used for their intended purposes is to see the programs with your own eyes. All three bright spots organize *site visits* for HNIs. SNEHA and LOLT take them into the slums to see the programs in action. TFI goes a step further—not only do donors visit the schools and observe a class; they also get to teach a class for an hour during "TFI Week", which sparks a feeling of empathy for the fellows—and giving.

9) Invest in Professional Fundraising Staff

Passion is not enough. To be successful, nonprofits need to find highly qualified employees to devote their full attention to prospect research, new donor acquisition/events, cultivation, follow up (e.g. sending thank-you emails), solicitations (asking for money, writing proposals), stewardship (keeping your donors informed of your progress throughout the year), and renewal requests. Great NGO executives have Development Directors by their side to do all the behind-the-scenes work necessary to ensure that the CEO is effective in his or her role as the "asker in chief" and "Chief Relationship Officer."

There are many small NGOs in India that rely on unpaid volunteers, but they struggle to make ends meet and grow their programs. According to our survey, only one third of Indian nonprofits have dedicated fundraising staff. Investing in professional fund development staff pays off in significant revenue for the organization. It is important to recognize fundraising as a profession, and one which deserves to be paid a proper wage as with any other white collar careers, from lawyer to accountant, doctor to software engineer.

Bright spot organizations devote sufficient resources to their donor development efforts. Each of the organizations profiled in this report has a team of dedicated fundraising staff – professional fundraisers who are paid full-time to focus exclusively on the fund development cycle.



Professional Fundraisers learning from each other at a Samhita GoodCSR training workshop in Bangalore, 2018

10) Foster a 'Culture of Philanthropy' within your organization ("Everyone a Fundraiser")

Fundraising bright spots exemplify a "culture of philanthropy" within their organizations. In UnderDeveloped, a 2013 survey and report by CompassPoint and the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, they defined the term "culture of philanthropy" as having the following elements:

> *"Most people in the organization (across positions) act as ambassadors and engage in relationship-building. Everyone promotes philanthropy and can articulate a case for giving. Fund development is viewed and valued as a mission-aligned program of the organization. Organizational systems are established to support donors. The executive director [AKA the CEO] is committed and personally involved in fundraising."*

The three NGOs selected as fundraising 'bright spots' for this report believe that everyone in the nonprofit is responsible for bringing in resources and engaging donors in the mission. It is baked in to their approach, and not just the purview of the "fundraisers." Ownership of the fund development process is shared across the organization—by the founder, CEO, board of trustees, ground staff, and the marketing/resource mobilization team members. That doesn't mean that everyone asks for money. At Teach for India, for example, the development team pulls in program staff as needed to inform donors and funders about what's happening on the ground; in addition, they leverage their teaching fellows and program alumni for meetings with important partners. Program staff also bring in fundraising staff as needed—it's an all-hands-on-deck effort.

One of the most valuable groups of volunteers a nonprofit can have in the resource mobilization process is its board of trustees. Unfortunately for most NGOs in India (over 60% of survey respondents), board members are not involved in fundraising. This finding was true regardless of the size of the organization (i.e., there is the same level of involvement in fundraising for small, medium, large or super-sized NGO). Yet our bright spot organizations are the exception. Their board of trustee members introduce the CEO and development team to their network of wealthy individuals and corporates, are active in selling tickets to fundraising events, participate in crowdfunding campaigns and year-end appeals, and host dinner parties in their homes.

From my experience working with hundreds of nonprofits over the past two decades, the difference between small organizations that constantly struggle with their finances and large NGOs with healthy budgets and robust programs comes down to whether everyone in the organization recognizes their part in the fund development process – or not. In thriving nonprofits, all stakeholders embrace their role in building interactive and mutually-beneficial relationships with the organization's donor base, seeing them not just as givers but as valued partners. I encourage you to foster a 'culture of philanthropy' in your organization as well.

"Everybody is a fundraiser at LOLT. All of us are at it all the time. Because at the end of the day you are not asking for money for yourself—you are asking to transform a life. Once you get that you are unstoppable; it doesn't matter who is standing in front of you".

--Sheela Iyer, Light of Life Trust

6. Case Studies of Impact: Profiles of Three Fundraising Bright Spots

A) Light of Life Trust

16% of Light of Life Trust (LOLT)'s annual revenue comes from individuals (friends, family, general public). This percentage also happens to be the average amount for large Indian NGOs as a whole (see Indian Giving Benchmarking Report page 22, Section G "How much are we raising from individuals?"). LOLT enjoys a diverse mix of revenue sources, with companies (CSR) representing the largest share at 42% of total income, followed by 25% from Foreign foundations/multi-lateral organizations (for example Gates, USAID), and 15% Indian Foundations/Trusts; none of LOLT's revenue comes from the Government. In 2018 individual giving accounted for ~ INR 99 lakh of LOLT's income (~$135,000). They reported a total of 517 donors (up from 480 retail givers the year before), for an average gift size of INR 19,200 (~$260). 58% of these individuals (300 total) are loyal donors to the organization, making recurring gifts to LOLT year after year. This is no accident. The Light of Life Trust achieves these impressive results by:

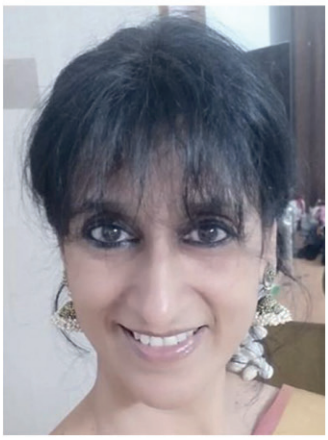
- *Being passionate about their cause*
- *Being unapologetic about asking for money*
- *Focusing on their outcomes/impact*
- *Telling powerful stories*
- *Investing in professional fundraising staff*
- *Investing in your relationships with donors*
- *Creating meaningful experiences*
- *Fostering a "Culture of Philanthropy"*



Be Passionate About Your Cause

LOLT is a mission-driven organization that does a great job of appealing to both the head and the heart. Founded by charismatic meditation instructor Villy Doctor in 2002, LOLT is committed to breaking the generational cycle of poverty, one life at a time. Those who meet Villy are attracted to her commitment for the cause and want to join her in supporting her nonprofit organization. And Villy is not shy about asking for money. She leverages her personal and professional contacts (including many grateful meditation students) towards giving. Each year Villy runs her own pages for LOLT's everyday giving campaigns, and was the second largest fundraiser last year in the Mumbai Marathon. Thanks to her very hands-on and successful efforts, LOLT was one of the top five fundraisers nationwide out of 270 participating NGOs.

Be Unapologetic about Asking for Money



Despite the high profile of LOLT's founder, the real unsung hero of the organization is an unabashed fundraiser named Sheela Iyer. A former software developer, at age 50, Sheela decided to work for an NGO because she wanted to do something more meaningful with her career. After four years at LOLT she has truly found her calling overseeing the fund development team. As a professional fundraiser, Sheela plays a key role in the organization both in communications (PR, social media, digital marketing) and as an effective frontline fundraiser herself. As described earlier, Sheela is unapologetic about asking for money. When she meets a potential donor at a social function, she tells them a compelling story about her organization—the kind of story that makes you want to open up your wallet and donate generously (see text box below). As Sheela puts it, *"People ask you what you do and you just give it to them."* For example, she recently saw that an old friend of hers posted on Facebook that he is now CEO of a large company (someone she lost touch with and hadn't spoken to in over a decade). Sheela decided that she had to get in touch with him, so she picked up the phone and called him out of the blue. After the pleasantries Sheela said, *"I will come straight to the point. I am calling you now on behalf of LOLT. I noticed that your company supports similar causes. Could you connect me with someone from your CSR team so that I can take this forward?"* His response was, *"of course,"* and now that company is a Light of Life Trust sponsor.

Sheela has encouraged her direct reports, Sejal Shah and Harpal Singh Kamal to follow her lead. At first Sejal was reluctant to make the ask, but then she remembered – it's for the children, and that changed everything. After practicing her pitch many times, when she meets a prospective giver she feels comfortable talking about money. Sejal is direct, and says things like, *"for the same amount that you will spend on a cup of coffee you can support our work."* Harpal is also frank with his prospects. He lets them know the cost of sponsoring a child for a year, and says things like, *"even if you can't support the full amount I will be grateful (even if just ten bucks)."*

Focus on Your Outcomes and the Money will Follow

What makes LOLT successful in the area of fundraising? According to Sheela, it has to do with how they project their work. LOLT's proven model speaks for itself – the fact that they eject the entire family out of the generational cycle of poverty by going deeper and attending to the needs of the child moves people to want to donate. As outlined in their Annual Impact Report, LOLT stewards philanthropic support by demonstrating measurable outcomes. In 2018, LOLT served a total of 18,000 beneficiaries in the rural communities of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. 85% of the participants in Project Anando (their educational initiative) completed their secondary education. The majority have gone on to pursue higher education through junior college, graduation, or vocational training, and over a thousand are now employed in a variety of well-paying professions, from Engineering to Optometry to Nursing. This transparency about their programmatic inputs, outputs and outcomes instills confidence in LOLT's prospective givers.

Appealing to the Heart and the Head: How Sheela Iyer Introduces Light of Life Trust

"We break the generational cycle of poverty. In rural India, generation after generation of the underprivileged gets deeper and deeper into that cycle of poverty instead of coming out of it. What we do at Light of Life is try to eject one child from this cycle by educating the child, and making sure that they are employable at the end of that. Until 7th standard education is free in India; most children attend until then. But the dropout happens at the 8th standard (secondary school), that's when the aide is gone and the male child is able to contribute to family income and the female child is able to look after siblings.

Unlike most other organizations, we focus at the secondary education level, a crucial point for the parents and the child, when the dropout is at its highest. That's where we doing the handholding, to prevent the child from entering the labor force and joining the ranks of the daily wage earners. We have thousands of stories of success to share with our donors, which is very effective with donors.

We don't just provide educational materials and say 'go study.' That has no impact because it's a larger problem. We attend to the needs of the child, in terms of Monday to Friday we have supplementary education to bring the child up to speed. The quality of education in India is very poor. From the first to seventh standard there are examinations and no evaluations. The child comes to 8th standard with a level of 4th or 5th grade. Light of Life Trust provides supplemental education and coaching to bring them up to 8th standard first, and make sure that the child gets through first qualifying examination at 10th grade successfully. So our success rate is 98% pass rate for children who would otherwise have joined the daily wage earner force; 85% of them go for higher education.

But it doesn't end there. We recognize the environment they are in. There is also a continuous engagement with the community and parents in organizing events and intensive engagement with people on ground including regular counselling, interacting in parent's meetings, and cultural programs with parents for all the three years of the program. We work to transform one life at a time, taking the time to address all the parameters that determine whether they drop out or succeed in school and in life."



Tell Powerful Stories

While statistics appeal to the head, beneficiary stories appeal to the heart. LOLT brings their data to life through their Stories of Change. These snapshots illustrate the impact of their program in a more personal way. This elicits an emotional response which inspires giving, often in the form of sponsoring a child's education at 9,600 rupees a year (includes the school uniform, books, and ongoing coaching). Stories like Bhagyashree's put a face to LOLT's work.



Bhagyashree is a single parent child and at the time of enrolment with LOLT, her mother was the sole earning member who sold flowers for a living. She joined Project Anando in 2006, in the Chondhi Center, Alibaug. After she passed her Std X and XII exams with good marks, Bhagyashree decided to pursue the Diploma Course (Air Hostess Training) from the Frankfinn Institute. Having completed the course with an education loan, she worked hard and opportunities opened up for her. She joined Merchant Hotel in Navi Mumbai at a remuneration of 9,000/- per month. She moved as a receptionist in a corporate office where she also completed a Diploma in Logistics, Export and Shipping which enabled her to get a promotion in the same department earning an annual remuneration of INR 3,60,000/-.

Invest in Professional Fundraising Staff

LOLT has six staff on their fund development team (which is also the average for the NGO's surveyed in our Indian Giving Benchmarking Report) out of a total of 100 employees, and four full-time staff members dedicated exclusively to fundraising. Their resource development strategy involves three aspects: individuals, foundations, corporates, with one person working on raising money from individuals only, and three working on companies (CSR) and foundations. The staff have clear targets for the number of students they want to raise funds for, and everyone tries to achieve the same.

Donor Acquisition Methods: *What's working in attracting new givers?*

Like with most NGOs, the #1 way that LOLT identifies prospective givers is through the founder's network. Villy teaches meditation free of cost, and when her grateful students insist on paying she redirects them to LOLT to make a charitable donation. Similarly, LOLT Board members invite their connections to participate in their various fundraising events, and the fund development team asks their existing donors for references for other individuals to approach for support. In this way the organization ***starts from their center*** (i.e. the people closest to the mission—LOTL's senior leadership, staff, Board, and existing donors), and ***slowly works its way outwards*** to acquire new donors. LOLT also finds fun, creative ways to attract givers, such as a:

- *Painting Exhibition* where they book an art museum for 3-6 months and then auction off the paintings by underprivileged children served by Light of Life and professional painters. All the proceeds from the sale of the art go to supporting more LOLT kids;

- *Musical Drama Show*. The proceeds of the performance came to Light of Life trust.

- *Daan Utsav*. During India's Joy of Giving week (held around Gandhi's birthday on October 2nd), LOLT sets up "wish trees" at various sites (gyms, company lobbies, etc.), with denomination of children's wishes (e.g. rupees 300 for a pair of shoes or INR 600 for stationery and textbooks); all these funds raised go directly to the people;

- *Tata Mumbai Marathon* is a major event for LOLT. Staff, volunteers and beneficiaries participate in running and fundraising. Last year a boy from a remote village, wearing torn shoes, ran the half marathon in one hour and 24 minutes; LOLT got a company to then sponsor his education and training for three years.

Events like marathons serve as effective vehicles for 'friend-raising'. LOLT's newly acquired givers are then added to the organization's database, and the resource mobilization team follows up with them individually after the point-of-entry event to cultivate the relationship for larger gifts.

Invest in Donor Relationships

Another thing that pays off for LOLT is the time they spend investing in their relationships with givers. LOLT Founder and Managing Trustee Villy Doctor often gets together with donors and funders, and makes regular phone calls to inform them about the organization. Even though LOLT keeps their supporters up-to-date through bi-monthly newsletters (both electronic and print), their Annual Reports, Impact Report, and child profiles which describe the sponsee's academic progress for the year, it is the more personal, high-touch encounters that move the relationship forward and result in philanthropic giving. In addition to in-person meetings, Sheela uses WhatsApp texts to follow up individually after sending a generic group email (for Daan Utsav and Marathon), for example. She finds this method more effective than email. For Sejal, direct telephone calls have worked the best. She has a plan in mind before she speaks to them – a specific thing that she will ask for during the call. Face-to-face solicitations have also been working well for Sejal; it gives her a chance to make a one-to-one connection and explain why Light of Life is so impactful. Conversely, online crowd-funding platforms have yielded the lowest return on the investment for Light of Life ("lots of effort for minimal funds raised"), which is consistent with the findings of our Survey on Fundraising from Individuals.

Create Meaningful Experiences

LOLT is great at creating authentic, curated experiences for their individual givers, from art exhibits to house parties and from volunteer programs to field trips. Perhaps most impactful are their grassroots site visits. These field trips take place each quarter and include 25 existing and prospective donors (current supporters are asked to bring their friends as a way to acquire new donors). LOLT books a bus for the entire day and organizes a busy itinerary that includes 3.5 hours travel time to rural parts of Maharashtra, lunch, and a half day of programming. During the long drive to the LOLT center, program staff describe their role and the work of the Trust. When they arrive the center, the donors get a chance to meet with the ground team and interact with the beneficiaries. A typical center has 70 children, and after a round of introductions between the kids and the donors, their informal Q & A session can get pretty interesting.

Donors are often very impressed with the questions the 13 year-old rural children ask them (e.g. "What do you do? What does your company do? How many nonprofits are you funding right now?"). Donor feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with many visitors reporting feeling extremely touched by the experience. Capitalizing on these warm feelings, LOLT staff often ask the guests to support a specific need while they are on site or on the bus back home (saying things like, "We would really like to support another 50 kids—who would like to sponsor that?"). As Sheela Iyer puts it, *"Once the donors take the field visit they are totally sold. The real heroes are the program staff in the field. They are so impressed by what they are doing and how dedicated the ground team is that the donors are eager to support the work."*

Foster a Culture of Philanthropy

A key to Light of Life's tremendous growth—going from an annual operating budget of 11.5 million rupees in FY09 to over 60 million by FY19—is the fact that all corners of the NGO are on board with the idea of raising money. As described above, the Founder and Managing Trustee Villy Doctor not only reaches out to her network of High Net-worth Individuals (HNIs) on behalf of LOLT, but also leads by example with the retail fundraising strategy as well (e.g. running her own pages for the Mumbai Marathon). The organization's CEO Ramesh Daswani is also directly involved with fundraising by leveraging his Rotary Club connections, participating in face-to-face meetings with donors, and asking for money directly through personal relationships he cultivates both at the middle of the pyramid and with HNIs. In addition, 75% of the Board of Trustees make financial contributions to the organization, as well as providing valuable in-kind support such as the LOLT headquarters office, donating space for their fundraisers, taking out paid ads in their donor books, and inviting their networks to join them in supporting the cause (especially during Daan Utsav, the painting exhibition, and the marathon). As Sheela puts it, *"Everybody is a fundraiser at LOLT. All of us are at it all the time. Because at the end of the day you are not asking for money for yourself—you are asking to transform a life. Once you get that you are unstoppable; it doesn't matter who is standing in front of you."*



Photo by Morry Rao Hermón

Profiles of Fundraising "Bright Spots" in Action continued...

B) Society for Nurturing Education Health and Awareness (SNEHA)

Like LOLT, SNEHA is a large nonprofit organization based in Mumbai that was founded by an inspiring woman with a powerful vision for change. Although only 5% of the funds raised by SNEHA come from individuals, it is a significant and growing portion of their budget. In 2018, SNEHA secured close to INR 7 million from givers (~ $100,000 US), up by 60% from the previous year. SNEHA had a total of 192 donors in 2018 (up significantly from 2017 when it was 80 people). Although presently 55% of their revenue comes from Corporates (CSR), SNEHA strives to diversify its funding so that they are less dependent on one source. That's why they have been redoubling their efforts to engage individual donors. For SNEHA, funds raised from individuals and from trusts/foundations have proven to be a more stable source than CSR fundraising. Plus unlike foundations or corporates, individual giving is often unrestricted and can be used for core support.

Be Passionate About Your Cause

Dr. Armida Fernandez founded SNEHA twenty years ago with a vision for transforming the healthcare delivery system for low-income pregnant women and their newborns. As a neonatologist working in public hospitals in Mumbai serving the poorest patients for three decades, Dr. Fernandez had grown tired of having to address the symptoms of a broken system – poor women dying in childbirth, babies born way too early, etc. She came up with a solution that would address the root causes of the problem. Rather than waiting for the mothers to arrive her doorsteps too sick to save them and their infants, she would move into the slums to prevent infant mortality, pre-term births and other complications from arising in the first place. Her bold idea immediately attracted interest from individual donors.



Armida Fernandez, MD, Founder and Chairperson of the SNEHA Board

While at a wedding, Dr. Fernandez shared her frustration with a friend. She told him that she was "tired of the hospital and needed to go to the slums." To her surprise, her friend Nevil replied, "I'm going to sell a property and I'll give you the money from the sale and you can move from the hospital to the slums." But the property was never sold. Nevil was in his early 50s, and the next morning he had a massive heart attack and died. His wife Patricia came to her with a check and says, "Armida, this is the money that Nevil wanted you to work in the slums." Dr. Fernandez protested—"...But you have five children, and the youngest is only five years old. I'm not going to accept this." Yet Patricia insisted, saying that these were Nevil's last words before he died. To which Armida responded, "Then in that case we have to work together!" And so Patricia joined the new NGO's board as a trustee and SNEHA's very first funder, and to this day she remains one of the most valuable board members, actively involved in the organization's fundraising efforts.

Be Unapologetic When Asking for Money

Now *"a young 75,"* Dr. Fernandez is constantly discovering that there are so many people who want to help. In the early days it just happened organically—she would meet someone and get them to support her nonprofit or join the board. *"You need to talk about what you are doing wherever you go—tell everyone. At social events at family events. I used to say no Christmas gifts, no birthday gifts, just give a check to SNEHA."*

Dr. Fernandez was what you call an "Accidental Fundraiser." She was naturally good at it, and unapologetic about asking for money. *"I don't feel uncomfortable at all,"* she says. *"This is the work I do. If you feel strongly about it give it, if not that's fine."* Today, with CEO Vanessa D'Sousa by her side, SNEHA has a real plan and is much more effective at fundraising.

Invest in Professional Fundraising Staff



SNEHA has a lean but mighty fund development department consisting of just three staff members fully dedicated to fundraising (less than one percent of the NGO's 409 full-time employees). SNEHA's CEO Vanessa contributes a substantial amount of her time raising funds at the top of the donor pyramid (HNIs, corporates, etc.). She supervises an Associate Director of Fundraising & Donor Partnerships Sangeetha Vadanan, who in turn oversees one junior fundraising officer. According to Dr. Fernandez, Vanessa has been a godsend because she does the follow up and follow through—and she's really good at that. The two of them make a great team. At the beginning of prospective donor visits, Dr. Fernandez presents an overview of the SNEHA model. This is followed by a tour of the programs provided by the program staff. Then Vanessa closes the deal and secures the gift.

Dr. Fernandez has this advice for the next generation of social entrepreneurs:
"Whatever you do, you must truly believe in the work – it must come from within you. Because you want to make a difference. Then go and find people who share your values but bring different skills, and great staff to run the programs." And as Founder don't interfere. *"When the time comes,"* she says, "you need to hand over the responsibilities to experts, and give them enough space to work as they deem right."

Focus on Your Outcomes

A key to SNEHA's success is its proven approach to maternal and child health. According to Program Director Sushma Shinde, *"the integrated model SNEHA is trying to work in now, beginning from adolescent health to child health, including domestic violence is a very comprehensive approach."* Sushma has been with SNEHA for almost two decades, initially working with Dr. Fernandez on a city-level maternal newborn health project. Over the years Sushma has developed a robust monitoring, learning and evaluation (MLE) system which has attracted donor support and trust in the NGO. As trustee and donor Nitin Niyar puts it, *"There are lots of important causes out there– a wide range of Indian NGOs are worth supporting. But SNEHA actually has been able to demonstrate impact and potential for scaling up."* This demonstrated impact is no accident. SNEHA has consciously made an investment in its research and outcome measurement capacity. Their system includes an independent MLE team which reports to the Research Director. Every six months the team conducts a survey of a small sample of beneficiaries to keep tabs on what is happening on ground. This objective process, which includes time-bound performance metrics, brings a lot of credibility to the evaluation reports, and ensures transparency for the donors and funders. It also helps the program staff to course-correct in the event that things are not working in the way they were intended. Sushma's team presents monthly reports to the trustees, highlighting the key results of their performance metrics.

Engage your Donors

Given that Dr. Fernandez retired as Dean of a prestigious medical college when starting her NGO, she already had instant access to a rich network of potential major donors. From the very beginning her nonprofit has had the most success with individuals at the top of the pyramid (i.e., HNIs and philanthropists). Yet rather than treating them merely as a pocket book, Dr. Fernandez and her team have found ways to engage donors in the mission of the organization. In return, individual givers (especially HNIs) have helped SNEHA to procure additional resources (internal capacity building, technological support, etc.) and significant CSR funding, thanks to their professional contacts within companies based in Mumbai.

A good example was a large donor to their childhood nutrition program from Bain Consulting. Vanessa would invite him and his wife to various events but they never came. Then one day she went to him for help with their strategy, and not only did he offer to volunteer—he brought together a whole team of his colleagues to lend their professional skills as pro-bono consultants. They came up with a very valuable five-year plan for the nonprofit. Similarly, Vanessa approached a technology expert, who not only funded but also organized some focus groups among SNEHA staff to help the organization figure out how to leverage technology and apps to improve its programs and services. He and his wife (who was also a tech worker) came out to the field to see how SNEHA could use technology to make its field work more effective and efficient.

"It's very easy in today's CSR world to allow all of your funding to come from CSR. We want to keep the diversity for two reasons—one because CSR can be a little unsteady; they may have a change in strategy or senior management and overnight they can pull the rug out from under your feet. Whereas I find that individual donors tend to stay for a much longer time. Therefore bringing in the diversity even if it takes more time is well worth it."

--Vanessa D'Souza, CEO, SNEHA

In addition, SNEHA gets its constituents involved through a formal **volunteer program** managed by a dedicated staff member. Most of their volunteers are corporate employees, and some help out with the retail fundraising strategy (e.g. the walkathon). Many volunteers have ended up becoming donors, and have also connected SNEHA to their networks who have also donated time and money to the organization (although from their experience, HNIs as a whole have not been particularly interested in volunteering). SNEHA volunteers assist with:

- Health education sessions
- Awareness campaigns where they come up with the skit, etc.
- Community media
- Wall paintings (murals) with health messages on childhood nutrition
- Counselling sessions with the mothers
- Planting kitchen gardens

Develop Your Board

When SNEHA started in 1999, the NGO's board of trustees was largely uninvolved with the fundraising, but they were deeply committed to the cause of health of children. The small, all-woman board was comprised of Dr. Fernandez's fellow neonatologists and professors from the Department of Pediatrics, and Patricia (SNEHA's first donor). As the organization began to grow, Dr. Fernandez expanded her board to include men with expertise in banking, finance, and HR. Building the board not only helped SNEHA to raise money; it also made the nonprofit more strategic and professionally run. By engaging the trustees in the mission of the organization, and leveraging their expertise in management issues, it also translated into greater donations, as well as a commitment to fundraise from their networks.

Create Memorable Experiences

SNEHA organizes two kinds of "point-of-entry" events that introduce new givers to the cause—an annual fundraising dinner and smaller house parties. Their **annual gala** (called "SNEHA's Friends") is well attended, attracting between 200 - 250 HNIs (60% of whom are women and 40% are men). Attendees donate a minimum of INR 5,000 (~ $72 USD), or purchase a table for INR 25,000 ($362). Net income from the gala has been on the rise. While the expenditure ranges from INR 5 to 8 lakh, SNEHA was able to net INR 25 million in year one, and last year they netted INR 5 million thanks to increased table sales.

These donor dinners are held at a restaurant on a Sunday afternoon so that those who buy tables can bring their families, parents, kids, etc. and have a fun time together. The program starts with a brief introduction about SNEHA from Vanessa, followed by anecdotes of one or two beneficiaries who share their personal experiences, then a short video on SNEHA's work in the field, and finally, the entertainment portion of the evening (usually a play, music, or dance performed by external talent or the beneficiaries). SNEHA tries not to do a very ostentatious event because the guests want to see most of the money going to the services. One year they didn't pay for entertainment at all and instead identified donors who were good singers and dancers and brought them on to the stage to perform for the audience. The show was actually very professional (well-structured and rehearsed), and turned out to be a great way to engage the donors, who got to interact with one other and invited their friends to see them perform.

An objective for the gala is to get people to come in and have a nice time so that they return the next year. And they do. 75% of attendees come back again. Held every fall for the past four years, donors anticipate the "SNEHA Friends" gala; they look forward to it. Vanessa is currently planning to get a larger venue with more tables, since table sales have become more popular than ever.

SNEHA also organizes small dinners hosted by either a trustee or one of their large donors. These **house parties** are not fundraisers per se, but "friend-raisers"—an opportunity to meet new prospects and introduce them to the work of the NGO in an intimate social setting, with the goal of following up with them individually afterwards for a gift. Guests are brought together around a shared interest in an issue such as gender-based violence or adolescent health. During these highly curated dinners, major gift prospects learn about SNEHA's efforts to address the problem, and then have an opportunity to ask questions and engage in a conversation on that subject.

In addition to these point-of-entry events, SNEHA arranges **site visits** for HNIs who give more than 3 lakh rupees. Site visits are organized by cause area (e.g. maternal health, child nutrition, prevention of violence against women), depending on the donor's interest. They are led by the ground staff (usually the program director or coordinator), and accompanied by senior management. After staff presentations, donors are given a tour of the slums where SNEHA's projects take place. They get to interact directly with the program staff and beneficiaries (for example, they might go inside a beneficiary's house and meet with a group of women served by SNEHA). These site visits show the donors the kind of impact their contributions make to the community, and more specifically, to the clients. HNIs who work for a company often bring their partners, which helps SNEHA to secure significant CSR funding.



Photo by Morry Rao Hermón

Invest in Donor Relationships

As mentioned above, Dr. Fernandez and Vanessa spend a significant amount of their time cultivating and stewarding the relationships with their portfolio of major donors throughout the year. They employ an array of proven methods for keeping in touch with them after the donor makes their initial gift, attend the fundraising event or house party, including sending personal emails, in-person visits, field trips to meet the women beneficiaries, monthly e-newsletters, as well as phone calls to follow up for the donations. One year SNEHA had a gala just for palliative care, and so the follow up was a newsletter update just on that program.

SNEHA engages their individual givers in open conversations regarding their needs. They ask donors directly what kind of interventions they are interested in supporting, and what kind of communication they want to receive, gleaning important information about donor preferences that they find to be crucial in maintaining and deepening the relationship over time.

A good example of donor engagement is Mr. and Mrs. Mariwala. This generous couple connects with the community, reads SNEHA's reports, asks questions, provides feedback, understands their impact, and puts in an effort to get involved in the programs, engaging with the beneficiaries directly. Says Vanessa, *"Unlike CSRs who usually come with a set agenda for what they want to support, with individuals you can align their interests with your program. If you inform them about the impact that you will make they are flexible about what they will fund."*

What Vanessa has found very useful for donor cultivation and stewardship is engaging the wives of the HNIs. SNEHA makes a conscious effort to keep the conversation going after the initial point-of-entry event with the women in the families of HNIs, since they have more time, are willing to come for the site visits (much more than the husbands do), and are more open and interested in such conversations in the experience of SNEHA. She prefers it when they visit because she has a chance to take them into the field (which is better than meeting in their office).

Under Vanessa's leadership, the development team has been consciously working to build its "Friend of SNEHA" list and expand its donor circle through the events and one-on-one meetings. Online fundraising has not been as effective as face-to-face. Similar to the rest of NGOs surveyed, crowdfunding is not a significant source of SNEHA's growing donor base or revenue.

Foster a Culture of Philanthropy

At SNEHA, the entire staff of over 400 people – from the CEO to the Founder/Chair of the Board, the program directors and coordinators, the program officers, even community health workers - are very comfortable in taking donors around and talking about what they do at the organization. The program director is very involved in this role. During the site visits with the HNIs, Vanessa asks a cross-section of all staff (the program heads, field workers, supervisors, etc.) to attend so that while her presentation is going on she keeps roping in people at different levels to explain how they work on the ground. For example, if they are talking about family planning she'll have one of the field workers explain what the biggest challenge they face are and what strategies they use to overcome those challenges, because the authenticity that comes from the field worker actually doing the job is something she can never convey as CEO. Vanessa also enlists the help of program staff in writing up the proposals and reports to the donors/funders. It's a real team effort.

SNEHA Trustees are responsible for introducing the CEO and Founder/Chairperson of the Board to people in their networks who can contribute to the organization's growth in some way (i.e., by making donations, further networking, etc.). Board members have hosted donor dinners at their homes, invited their friends to hear about program, brought their friends to the gala and other fundraising events, and if SNEHA needs money for a specific program or new project, trustees will get in touch with their friends and ask them for money on behalf of the organization – in short, the board members serve as proactive ambassadors for SNEHA. The board has also introduced SNEHA to corporates (who give much bigger donations than the individuals).



Photo by Morry Rao Hermón

Profiles of Fundraising "Bright Spots" in Action continued...

C) Teach for India

19% of Teach for India (TFI)'s INR 661 crore annual revenue comes from individuals, which is above average for large Indian NGOs. A member of the Teach for All global network, TFI runs a fellowship program for college graduates and working professionals who spend two years as full-time teaching fellows in low-income Indian schools. Founded by social entrepreneur Shaheen Mistri in 2008, this successful nonprofit is heavily reliant on companies for support. At 61% of total income, the percentage of revenue TFI receives from CSR is much higher than the average for NGOs in India (13%), and even for very large nonprofits in India, who received 35% of their income from CSR (Indian Giving Benchmarking Report 2018).



Invest in Professional Fundraising Staff

TFI has the largest fund development department among the three 'Bright Spot' organizations profiled in this report. 21 out of their 261 full-time staff are dedicated to fundraising (8%), which is double the national average. Recognizing the need for a strong foundation from the very beginning, Founder & CEO **Shaheen Mistri** invested initial resources in building a robust resource development infrastructure. **Sara Khan**, Director of TFI National Development leads a team of 11 people, in addition to the seven regional fundraising staff who have their own revenue targets. The primary responsibility of fundraising lies with the national team, who are charged with raising TFI's annual budget.

In addition, TFI has recently launched a new diaspora fundraising strategy focused on U.S. giving. Under the direction of their New York-based Senior Advisor **Rahul Brahmbhatt,** TFI has set up a 501(c)(3) organization that receives tax deductible donations from American donors called Friends of Teach for India. 100% of TFI's relatively new diaspora giving strategy is focused on individual donors, primarily HNIs. The long-term aim is to set up a larger board for TFI America and simultaneously, build the various layers of the donor pyramid.

Hiring experienced resource development professionals like Sara and Rahul does not mean that Shaheen has delegated away her critical role as the organization's top spokesperson and fundraiser in chief. Quite the opposite. Understanding that donors often want to speak directly to the CEO rather than the fundraising staff, TFI development directors need to manage up, and use the Founder's time strategically to represent the organization, present its model at important donor meetings and public events, and nurture relationships with major donors and funders. Shaheen meets many potential major donors in her external affairs work (e.g., when giving a speech or serving on an education panel at a conference), and connects them to the development team. She often takes the first meeting and then Rahul and Sara the next.



Engage your Donors

One of the fundraising challenges identified by Shaheen is people not trusting that the organization will spend the money on what say they will. As Rahul puts it, *"In India, there seems to be a deficit of trust in institutions, especially in the non-profit place. There is a general thought that not everyone is paying their fair share so why should I? And a lot of this is generational, so anyone with a sum of money to invest in the social sector is more inclined to start their own foundation. The younger generation is more open to ideas now, but there is still this mistrust which exists. As part of a global network, Teach for India is a brand equity, which gives some credibility for the donors."* TFI fellows become brand ambassadors for the nonprofit once they graduate, and tell powerful stories about their experiences on the frontlines. They act as team captains for TFI's successful crowdfunding campaigns on GlobalGiving, soliciting their friends for online donations. In addition to brand identity, TFI builds trust by instilling confidence in its senior leadership, governing board, and programs. Shaheen credits the TFI board and chair for its credibility and reputation for serving with very high integrity.

Create Memorable Experiences

TFI organizes field trips where donors get a chance to meet the various stakeholders from the TFI office, visit schools where they observe the classroom, talk to the fellows and the headmaster, etc. Says Shaheen, *"just coming in and seeing the actual work and the conditions in which the kids and fellows live has been really impactful."* Many of these donors have never walked into a poor community, and they often feel immediately compelled to help. Taking it a step further, TFI runs a creative and fun event called "TFI Week" where donors come in to the classroom and actually teach for an hour, experiencing first-hand what it feels like to be on the other side. *"It's already eye-opening for people to visit a class as an observer,"* says Shaheen. *"It is very different having to stand in front of a class and understand how you can teach effectively in a really challenging environment. It builds a lot of empathy for what the fellows do day in and day out. Feedback from 'TFI Week' participants has been overwhelmingly positive."* And this empathy they develop for the fellows often translates into big gifts.

Foster a Culture of Philanthropy

Although only three out of eight board members (38%) significantly contribute financially themselves (which is the average for Indian nonprofits as a whole), a large part of the TFI board make introductions to their network of HNIs, foundations, and companies. 75% of TFI board members were involved in fundraising last year, compared to only 40% of NGO board members overall. In addition, program staff at TFI participate in fundraising. As soon as Sara knows what the prospective donor's interests are, she brings the relevant program person into interactions so that they can explain the work in a more compelling and authentic manner.

"There are two issues I see with the individual donor landscape in India. First, the donations are given to the temple to religious institutions more than they are given to philanthropic initiatives. And second, a lot of yogic reincarnation and karma theories say that if you are poor, if you are born into an unfortunate situation, it is your fault. This might influence giving in a country where parents tend to shelter their kids in India from what is not pleasant, like poverty.

I think if you and your family have lived in scarcity, it is hard for you to forget it. So people tend to compensate, the pendulum has moved to the other side, and they tend to make up for the years they have lived in scarcity. But millennials, in some ways, haven't lived in this kind of scarcity, so they don't get the frugality in expenditures.

A good group to understand this are Teach for India fellows, wherein they have picked TFI over really high paying jobs, and their journey with their parents has been challenging, but has evolved over time. In my experience, the less you have the more generous you are. The feeling of community and justice pays off.

-- Rahul Brahmbhatt, Teach for India



Photo by Morry Rao Hermón

7. How can you adopt these fundraising bright spot principles in your own organization?

Now that you have read the case studies and understand the ingredients behind their success, it's time for you to roll up your sleeves and implement these lessons learned in your own organization. Some of the guiding principles may be more relevant to you than others. And not all are necessary to create a robust pool of individual givers. Just do the best you can to adopt the fundraising bright spot practices that are most useful to you, and customize them as you see fit.

This may seem like a lot to do, especially if you don't have many individual givers yet. You may even encounter resistance with the very idea of 'Everyone a Fundraiser.' But remember that Rome wasn't built in a day. Creating a base of lifelong donors is a slow process. And changing your organization's culture takes time. The important thing is to set your intention and start somewhere.

Where to begin?

"As the Chinese proverb goes, "a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."
The first step is to have a conversation about fostering a 'culture of philanthropy' within your organization, and to take stock of how you are doing so far. Just like individual donor development work, it's all about relationships. Here are five steps you can take to get started:

1. **Have an open conversation** within your organization about these guiding principles, and do an honest assessment of how you stack up against them. Ask powerful questions like,
   - *Is your board engaged in fundraising?*
   - *Does your CEO like asking for money, and see it as part of his or her job?*
   - *Do you spend time getting to know your donors one-on-one? Have you sat down with them and asked them what motivates them about giving to your nonprofit?*
   - *And how they would like to receive information, interact with your team/beneficiaries or get more involved in the mission?*

2. **Spend time developing these principles** within your organization–make it a topic of a half-day board and staff retreat facilitated by a professional fundraiser; discuss as a team at the end of the year and look back on how you did in each of these domains.

3. **Invest in your board and staff capacity;** read up on the wealth of available literature on these topics (there is so much out there!); conduct professional development workshops onsite and send your folks to helpful conferences and trainings (both in-person and online). For more information on how to build a culture of philanthropy, including key indicators of success for your various stakeholders, download the Haas Jr. Fund's Beyond Fundraising report at https://www.haasjr.org/sites/default/files/resources/Haas_CultureofPhilanthropy_F1_0.pdf

4. **Develop a comprehensive fund development plan** that includes goals, objectives, and strategies. Chart a course for where you would like to be in five years in terms of the percentage of income you will receive from individuals, the number of givers, the kind of board of trustees you hope to develop, and the level of participation in the fund development process from all corners of the NGO, and the action-steps you will take to get there.

5. **Celebrate your accomplishments along the way;** acknowledge staff and volunteers when they exhibit these best practices, and especially when you see the fruits of your labor (e.g., when your donors renew their support, a prospect becomes a giver, or you have a successful fundraising or friend-raising event). It's important to lift up the small wins and your progress.

I wish you great success on your journey, and please don't hesitate to reach out to me if you have questions or get stuck along the road!

Feel free to e-mail me at morryhermon@berkeley.edu



8. Appendices

Appendix A – List of Interviewees

1. Light of Life Trust

- Sheela Iyer, Senior Manager, Marketing & Communications
- Villy Doctor, Founder & Managing Trustee
- Harpal Singh Kamal, Manager, Resource Mobilisation
- Sejal Shah, Senior Manager, Resource Mobilization
- Ramesh Daswani, CEO

2. SNEHA

- Vanessa D'Souza, Chief Executive Officer
- Armida Fernandez, MD, Founder and Chair of the Board
- Sushma Shende, Program Director
- Nitin Nayar, Donor, Trustee

3. Teach for India

- Sara Khan, Director, National Development
- Rahul Brahmbhatt, Senior Advisor
- Jessica D'Cunha, Manager, National Development
- Rajshree Doshi, Program Director
- Shaheen Mistri, Founder & CEO

4. Preliminary Bright Spot Nominee Interviews

- Sundeep Talwar, Chief Marketing Officer, Akshaya Patra Foundation
- Jayant Rastogi, CEO, Magic Bus India
- Bineesh E M, Director, Retail Fundraising, Magic Bus India Foundation
- Dr.Prahalathan KK, Co-founder, Bhumi
- Vincy Abraham, Manager, Partnerships, Apnalaya
- Dilzad Khariwalla, Marketing Manager, Annamrita Foundation